

COMMUNICATION AND ARGUMENT IN THE QUR'AN

HARUN YAHYA

INTRODUCTION

In the Qur'an, Allah reveals that one of the believers' most important acts of worship is proclaiming, in the sense of communicating, the truths revealed in the Qur'an and inviting people to faith. This act of worship encompasses every area of life, namely, one's words, attitude, and behavior, for they are responsible for telling others about the Qur'an's moral teachings and representing Islam. In fact, their conversations among themselves are mutual communications, for they invite each other to obey the Qur'an's precepts and to reflect the Qur'anic morality. In short, they are generally engaged in proclaiming the truth.

On the other hand, one of the characteristics of the unbelievers, as revealed in the Qur'an, is disputation or argument. This has been the case ever since Allah commanded Satan to **"prostrate to Adam"** (Surat al-Isra': 61). Upon hearing this, he began to argue with Allah - and surely, Allah is beyond that. Unlike communication, argumentativeness arises from selfishness and brings a person no good. Therefore, believers must always be ready to communicate Allah's message and avoid the unbelievers' tendency to argue and dispute. In the Qur'an, Allah joins the avoidance of disputation and readiness for communication together:

If they argue with you, say: "I have submitted myself completely to Allah, and so have all who follow me." Ask those given the Book and those who have no Book: "Have you become Muslim?" If they become Muslim, they have been guided. If they turn away, you are only responsible for conveying the message. Allah sees His servants. (Surah Al 'Imran: 20)

This book has been written to distinguish between communication and argumentation. It will examine the logic behind communication and the methods it uses, as well as the negative character of argumentativeness, and then analyzes both according to the Qur'an.

COMMUNICATION IN THE QUR'AN

Say: "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is always bound to vanish." (Surat al-Isra': 81)

How communicators present themselves

In spiritually ignorant societies, people behave politely to gain some benefit. Such a society's members are well aware of these expectations and so naturally wonder what others are seeking to gain by taking an interest in them. This attitude does not change when someone sits down with them to tell them about a *new worldview*. What they fail to realize is that the believers do not follow this social "norm"; rather, their only purpose is to carry out Allah's command to spread His word. Thus, they seek only Allah's good pleasure and hope to receive His mercy and compassion. For this reason, they expect no profit or gain from others. If the people they are talking with decide to embrace Islam and live a religiously moral life, they will not ask for any favors, because they are not communicating their own ideas, but the religious morality established by Allah, Who has created everything from nothing and has told everyone to practice religious morality.

But the unbelievers are most often not aware that the person talking with them is a believer. And even if they are, they would not know that nothing is expected in return. For this reason, when a believer starts talking with them about the Qur'an's moral teachings, they will most likely ask themselves what the underlying expectations are. Given this reality, the believers must remove such unfounded suspicions from the unbelievers' minds before talking with them about Islam. The unbelievers must understand that the believers' goal is not to gain any advantage, but only to please Allah. The prophets and messengers did this when they communicated Allah's religion to others. When we consider their words, as recorded in the Qur'an, we see that they first emphasized that they are trustworthy:

And to 'Ad We sent their brother Hud. He said: "O my people, worship Allah. You have no deity apart from Him. You are merely fabricators. O my people, I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of Him who brought me into being. So will you not use your intellect?" (Surah Hud: 50-51)

When Nuh's (as) people told him that **"we consider you to be liars"** (Surah Hud: 27), he replied:

... “O my people, what do you think? If I were to have clear evidence from my Lord and He had given me a mercy direct from Him, but you were blind to it, could we force it on you if you were unwilling? O my people, I do not ask you for any wealth for it. My wage is the responsibility of Allah alone. I will not chase away those who have faith. They are surely going to meet their Lord. However, I see you as ignorant people.” (Surah Hud: 28-29)

The unbelievers may feel different forms of unease when met with believers who are only interested in communicating Allah’s message, because they are used to dealing with *harmful* and *dangerous* people. Therefore, they are inclined to keep their distance from and be wary of them.

In this case, the believers must stress their trustworthiness and deal with that person’s likely or visible fears. If the latter are uneasy with the believers’ intellectual struggle, then the logic of that struggle must be laid out clearly according to the Qur’an. They must be told that the believers’ intellectual struggle is only against those who are hostile to the religion of Allah, oppose the Qur’an, and spread trouble in society. In addition, the believers must explain that they treat everyone in a friendly manner and within a framework of justice, tolerance, and respect. As that person might have heard many negative things about the believers, the latter must dispel their preconceptions. For example, they explain how, according to the Qur’an, all prophets, messengers, and believers have been slandered throughout history. This is also a good time to make the point that such character assassination is actually a sign of the target being a “genuine believer.”

However, the factor that will really cause these explanations to bear fruit is the believers’ own “state.” Inspiring confidence is possible through behavior, looks, and gestures or, to be more accurate, a state of mind that gives rise to these. Believers can influence the other party in direct proportion to their determination to live by religious moral values and their resulting purity, sincerity, and deep faith. So long as they maintain complete determination and an unshakeable persistence, the unbelievers’ doubts about them, as well as any slanderous accusations, will have no impact on them. In this way, trustworthiness becomes an ingrained part of the believers’ character and is reflected in all of their behavior.

This can be seen most clearly in the people Allah sent to communicate His religion. For example, Yusuf (as) did not abandon his submission to Allah and nobility when he was thrown into a dungeon on false charges of adultery. In fact, his fellow prisoners immediately recognized his good attributes. According to the Qur’an, two prisoners asked him to interpret their dreams. The reason why they felt that Yusuf (as), despite his “crime,” possessed such wisdom was his nature and the trustworthiness apparent in his behavior. They told him:

“...Tell us the true meaning of these dreams. We see that you are one of the righteous” (Surah Yusuf: 36).

One of the main reasons why believers have such high quality and reliable natures is that they consider inviting others to Islam as a religious observance; they are not responsible for ensuring that the other party actually comes to believe, for a person can only come to have faith by Allah's choosing, a secret set out in the verse:

When Allah wills to guide someone, He expands his breast to Islam. When He wills to misguide someone, He makes his breast narrow and constricted as if he were climbing up into the sky. That is how Allah defiles those who have no faith. (Surat al-An'am: 125)

According to the verse **“Many of humanity are deviators”** (Surat al-Ma'ida: 49), many people will not believe. Such a reality must not be allowed to affect the believers in any way. Allah only expects them to observe the Qur'anic morality and convey His message; He alone will determine their ultimate fate. Believers who understand this will never pursue other people to “persuade” them to convert. In addition, those being addressed must be reminded that they will only benefit by embracing Islam. Those who think that they will be doing the believers a great “favor” by abiding by religious virtues must be disabused of this mistaken idea, for their supposedly “superior” attributes play no role in attracting the believers' attention to them:

They think they have done you a favor by becoming Muslims. Say: “Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. No indeed! It is Allah Who has favored you by guiding you to faith, if you are telling the truth.” (Surat al-Hujurat: 17)

Faith benefits only the person concerned. Each person needs to understand that he or she needs faith, for Allah, Who is perfect, has no need for anyone to believe in Him. However, everyone needs to believe in Him and obtain His approval. Those being called to Islam must understand that they are doing no one a favor when they become Muslim, for this causes them to see themselves as very valuable, when such is not really the case. They must understand the falsity of self-praise and that, because of their unbelieving worldview, they are standing *on the edge of the abyss*. The only way to eternal salvation is Islam. For that reason, believers who have called them to Islam are, in fact, a very great blessing.

The fact that believers take an interest in others is in itself an honor. Unbelievers should be made aware of this, and of how Allah has blessed them by letting them hear about Islam. They must realize that the believers are preaching Islam because they have been charged with calling everyone to

eternal salvation and warning them about Hell. If the unbelievers can transcend their society's worldview and norms and begin to respect and trust the believers, then they can be told about the *real issue*: the facts that Allah reveals in the Qur'an. That is because these preparatory measures that impart this trust are intended to make it easier for the other party to comprehend the faith.

INTRODUCING ALLAH

To Thamud We sent their brother Salih. He said: “O my people, worship Allah. You have no deity apart from Him. He brought you into being from the earth and made you its inhabitants. So ask His forgiveness and then repent to Him. My Lord is Close and Quick to Respond.” (Surah Hud: 61)

Unbelievers have a totally different worldview from that outlined in the Qur'an, for they have developed distorted, fictitious, and *mythological* beliefs in accordance with their own non-Islamic understanding. For example, they believe that Allah is “sitting” in some corner of outer space and that, once He created the universe and human beings, left them on their own (surely He is beyond that). Such mistaken views cause them to disregard Allah and prevent them from grasping His greatness.

Shu'ayb (as) said of his people's deviant beliefs: **“...O my people, do you esteem my clan more than you do Allah? You have made Him into something to cast disdainfully behind your backs!...”** and explained what Allah was really like: **“...But my Lord encompasses everything that you do!”** (Surah Hud: 92).

Such people occasionally utter clichés that mention Allah's name, such as “Allah forbid” and “if Allah wills,” but He is like an abstract concept that hardly ever enters their minds. Perhaps they accept what they have heard about His existence and power, but they do not really believe it. This becomes clear whenever they are asked to do something for Allah or to suffer some inconvenience for another person's sake. In times of anxiety or potential loss, they show their insincerity by joining the unbelievers.

Most people in an unbelieving society openly deny Allah's existence and oppose the Qur'an. Some find support for their denial in materialist philosophy and the theory of evolution, and thus make these their ideological foundations. They present themselves as modern, enlightened, contemporary, scientific, intellectual, and so on in the hope of impressing others, and think that they have gained a “good reputation” by denying Allah. Their minds are so shallow that they cannot grasp something so clear as His existence.

These two groups must be approached in the same way: bringing them to the stage where they can see proofs of Allah's existence and finally understand that they must abandon their superstitions. And because they have established their denial on an ideological foundation, the bases of these ideologies must first be destroyed. For example, their blind belief in the theory of evolution must be dismantled by showing its impasses and internal inconsistencies. They must come to realize that this system is actually a gross deception.

After this point, the approach to each group is the same. Their ability to think independently and to trust their own judgments and intellects must be regained. Perhaps this is the first time they have been invited to “think,” as thinking is understood in the Qur’an. They will be forced to think about the origin of the fruits they have eaten for years, the water they have drunk, and the air they have breathed. They will be urged to consider where their bodies, eyes, ears, and hearts came from and who created them. The Qur’an teaches people how to think and often stresses what to think about:

Have you thought about the sperm that you ejaculate? Is it you who creates it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death for you and We will not be forestalled in replacing you with others [who are] the same as you and re-forming you in a way you know nothing about. You have known the first formation, so will you not pay heed? Have you thought about what you cultivate? Is it you who makes it germinate, or are We the Germinator? If We willed, We could have made it broken stubble. You would then be left devoid of crops, distraught: “We are ruined, in fact we are destitute!” Have you thought about the water that you drink? Is it you who sent it down from the clouds, or are We the Sender? If We willed, We could have made it bitter. So will you not give thanks? Have you thought about the fire that you light? Is it you who makes the trees that fuel it grow, or are We the Grower? We have made it to be a reminder and a comfort for travelers in the wild. So glorify the name of your Lord, the Magnificent! (Surat al-Waqi’a: 58-74)

Those to whom the faith is to be communicated must begin to think in this way. Nothing that has order or beauty could have come into existence on its own or by chance. Wherever things show evidence of balance, design, or beauty, someone had to have ordered them and brought them into being. Anyone who sees an ordered geometrical shape or a single letter of the alphabet drawn on a piece of paper will know that they have been drawn by someone with intelligence. The universe, in all its calculated balance, is surely the work of a supremely intelligent Creator. That Creator is Allah, the Lord of all things.

Therefore, what we see, hear, and feel all reveal Allah, the Creator of heaven and Earth. He has created things in order to manifest His attributes in them. It is enough to think about the universe’s perfection and matchless beauty to become aware of this clear truth, because all of the facts of creation clearly show that this glorious order belongs to someone. Once the person has grasped this truth, it will be even easier to describe the Qur’an’s moral values. After this understanding has been attained, a number of concepts that were unclear will begin to be clarified.

REMINDING PEOPLE ABOUT THE HEREAFTER

Fear a Day when no soul will be able to compensate for another in any way. No intercession will be accepted from it, no ransom taken from it, and they will not be helped. (Surat al-Baqara: 48)

One of the unbelievers' greatest spiritual problems is that they do not believe in the Hereafter, as if people had just "made it up" to console themselves after someone dies. The clearest indication of this doubt is their attitude when they speak of death or when someone dies. They do not like to speak of death, and so try to avoid the topic or turn the conversation toward something else. On the contrary, those who believe in the Hereafter do not grieve over death, for Allah has given their life and He will give it back from them. For someone who believes in the eternal life after death, death is not an event for which to feel sorry.

Those who have little or no belief in the Hereafter devastate people who are distant to the morality of the religion. When a relative dies, they say consoling words based on the Qur'an: "Don't be sad. He was a good person, so Allah will take him to Paradise." But because they lack sincere belief in the Hereafter, their words have no affect on their conscience. In their hearts, they believe that the world is real and that the Hereafter is nothing but a cloudy, unclear legend. As revealed in the Qur'an: **"They know an outward aspect of the life of this world but are heedless of the Hereafter"** (Surat ar-Rum: 7). But the Hereafter is totally real; if there is anything deceptive and doubtful, it is life in this world. If you ask the "people of Hell: **"...How many years did you tarry on Earth?"** they will answer: **"...We tarried there for a day or part of a day."** In this regard, Allah says:

You only tarried there for a little while, if you did but know. Did you suppose that We created you for amusement and that you would not return to Us? (Surat al-Mu'minun: 112-115)

Allah meets all of the desires that He has put into a person's lower self with the blessings He grants. For example, people want to eat and drink and so Allah created things to eat and drink. People like to love and be loved, be respected and talk with others, and so Allah created humanity as men and women. People desire what is beautiful, so Allah created the world and the universe and endowed them with endless beauty. Indeed, the purpose in His creating these desires in people's hearts is to grant them these blessings.

In addition, people want to live forever. But according to the unbelievers' mistaken logic, death makes this impossible. In fact, by creating the Hereafter

and making human beings so that they can live forever, Allah has responded to this desire. Death is only a passageway, the first stage in a journey that starts in this transient and deceptive world and leads to eternal life. It is the spirit that is real, not the body. With death, the spirit lives on in a different form.

According to their deeds, people will receive their true reward and punishment in the Hereafter. In this world, a believer may have a difficult life while an unbeliever may be rich and live in splendid debauchery. This is a requisite of the test in this life, for Allah's eternal justice demands that believers be rewarded and unbelievers be punished. He created the Day of Judgment, as well as the Garden and Hell, for this very purpose.

Recognition of this fact is of vital importance for people who learn about Islam. The faith in the Hereafter is the second basic tenet of Islam, after faith in Allah's existence. In addition, they must become familiar with the Qur'an, the Day of Judgment the final accounting, the Garden and Hell. They must know that Allah sees whatever they do, that the angels assigned to record these deeds are actually doing so, and that people are responsible for whatever they think, do, and say.

EXPLAINING IDOLATRY AND MONOTHEISM

Your God is One God. There is no deity but Him, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful. (Surat al-Baqara: 163)

Most people believe in Allah. However what deviates them from the path of Allah is their putting other deities before Him. The Qur'an calls this *idolatry*, and someone who does this is called an *idolater*. The essence of Islam is monotheistic, namely, humanity must serve only the one true God, Allah.

It is interesting that nearly everyone who puts other deities before Allah does not believe that they are idolaters. On the contrary, they offer many excuses as to how they are ideal Muslims, such as: "...**We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah...**" (Surat az-Zumar: 3). The Qur'an tells us about this and other ways by which the idolaters try to deny that they are associating Allah with His creatures:

On the Day that We gather them all together, We will ask those who associated others with Allah: "Where are the partner-deities for whom you made such claims?" Then they will have no recourse but to say: "By Allah, our Lord, We were not idolaters." See how they lie against themselves and how what they invented has forsaken them. (Surat al-An'am: 22-24)

Today's unbelieving society is one of *idolaters*. However, its members claim to be ideal Muslims. As far as they are concerned, *idolatry* means prostrating to idols or totems made of wood or stone. They think that putting other deities before Allah only means worshipping lifeless, three-dimensional forms. However, prostrating before something or someone is a symbol of servitude. Even if a person does not prostrate to them, he or she may be their servant. To associate the attributes that belong to Allah with anything or anyone else means that one is an idolater.

Allah is the only being worthy of worship. If people try to please other beings besides Allah (e.g., trying to get others to like them or trying to make them happy), they will be putting them before Allah. Even by expecting help from other beings, they take them as deities. If they decide to live according to these other people's rules, they have, in effect, deified them. On the other hand, true believers do not associate Allah with any of His creatures and do not recognize any other Lord, teacher, friend, master, or deity besides Allah. Surat al-Fatiha expresses this pure faith:

You alone do we worship. You alone do we ask for help. (Surat al-Fatiha: 3-4)

Human beings are, by nature, inclined to believe in one God and to live their lives according to this belief: **“I only created jinn and humanity to worship Me.”** (Surat adh-Dhariyat: 56). In light of this, people are responsible for conforming to the purpose of their creation and worshipping Allah alone. Since doing so is in tune with their creation, it is also the most natural and easiest way:

So set your face firmly towards the Religion, as a pure natural believer, Allah’s natural pattern on which He made humanity. There is no changing in Allah’s creation. That is the true Religion, but most people do not know it. (Surat ar-Rum: 30)

The basic message communicated to all non-Muslims is their need to put Allah first and to avoid associating Him with any of His creatures. They must be told that their society associates Allah with His creatures in many ways and that they must abandon all such mistaken views and practices.

They must be told that people commit the greatest sin when they associate Allah with His creatures and even when they put their own desires above His commands and prohibitions. Such people are described as one **“who has taken his whims and desires to be his deity”** (Surat al-Furqan: 43). Allah also says:

Have you seen him who takes his whims and desires to be his deity, whom Allah has misguided knowingly, sealing up his hearing and his heart, and placing a blindfold over his eyes? Who then will guide him after Allah? So will you not pay heed? (Surat al-Jathiyya: 23)

The most important piece of information that will save a person from idolatry is the “essential knowledge” about the real and basic nature of matter. If they sense that the material universe is an “illusion”, that is “a figment of their imagination” and thus has no foundation in reality, and that existing things are no more than “shadows” manifesting Allah’s glory, they will understand that Allah is the only real being and, therefore, the only deity.

One’s salvation from idolatry can only be achieved by putting Allah above all things, loving Him above all else, and recognizing no other law but His. In other words, they must replace their former worldview with that of the Qur’an. Indeed, this is what is expected of them. Otherwise, they may be rewarded by Allah with a terrible punishment in return for not conforming to the message.

This undertaking is a process that requires the active involvement of patient believers who can impart the true teachings of Islam and Qur’anic

morality in a way that new believers can easily understand and apply to their lives. This is because the kind of religion that he knew in ignorant society is a perverse mélange of legends and superstitions from which he will have learned many prejudices against Islam. Or he may know nothing at all about religion. For this reason, such individuals must be taught very carefully about religious morality.

EXPLAINING RELIGIOUS MORALITY

1. The Qur'an is true and under Allah's protection

Everyone knows that the Qur'an is Islam's holy book. However, it is, in reality, far more than that. The Qur'an is not just for Muslims, for Allah sent it to humanity and will hold all people responsible on the Day of Judgment for what they did with it. But most people remain generally ignorant about the Qur'an. Therefore all people need to know why the Qur'an was sent and every detail about the religion's principles and adopt them in their lives. The Qur'an is the only source from which one can learn his responsibilities towards his Creator, Allah. On the Day of Judgment, Allah will hold all people responsible of the Qur'an. This is related in the Qur'an thus:

So hold fast to what has been revealed to you. You are on a straight path. It is certainly a reminder to you and to your people, and you will be questioned. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 43-44)

The Qur'an is the word of Allah that confirms His earlier revealed books and separates what is true from what is false. It is a unique guide for all believers, for no human can ever produce anything even remotely resembling it.

There have always been those who deny that the Qur'an is Allah's word. One of their most familiar charges is that the Prophet (saas) wrote it and that they could write a similar book. Such attempts of people who make such perverted claims only to deny the supremacy of Allah and the Qur'an have always ended in frustration. Here are some verses that describe the truth and the incomparable nature of the Qur'an sent down from (the Presence of) Allah:

Say: "If both humanity and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could never produce anything like it, even if they backed each other up." (Surat al-Isra': 88)

This Qur'an could never have been devised by anyone besides Allah. Rather, it is a confirmation of what came before it and an elucidation of the Book that contains no doubt from the Lord of all the worlds. Do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "Then produce a *surah* like it and call on anyone you can besides Allah, if you are telling the truth." No, the fact is that they have denied something that their knowledge does not embrace and the meaning of which has not yet reached them. In the same way, those before them also denied the truth. See the final fate of those who do wrong! (Surah Yunus: 37-39)

The basic purpose of *communication* is to ensure that the other party accepts the Qur'an as his guide. Otherwise, there can be no faith or salvation. Abandoning all the principles and rules of the ignorant society, a person must take only the Qur'an as his guide and become a believer who pays meticulous attention in every command of Allah He states in the Qur'an.

To do this, a person must first have a good knowledge of the Qur'an and believe that it is Allah's word. Thus, those who want to spread Islam must show clear proofs that the Qur'an is Allah's revelation and that not even one syllable of it has been altered since it was first revealed. As the Qur'an states: **"The Words of your Lord are perfect in truthfulness and justice. No one can change His Words. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" (Surat al-An'am: 115)** and **"It is We Who have sent down the Reminder and We Who will preserve it" (Surat al-Hijr: 9).**

One of the most important proofs of the Qur'an's protection is that it contains no inconsistencies or contradictions. For twenty-three years, none of the verses that were sent down on different occasions and under different conditions were inconsistent with another, either in the facts it related or the commands it contained:

Will they not ponder the Qur'an? If it had been from other than Allah, they would have found many inconsistencies in it. (Surat an-Nisa': 82)

"Praise belongs to Allah, Who has sent down the Book to His servant and has put no crookedness in it." (Surat al-Kahf: 1)

The response to those who believe something different is clear:

Do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "Then produce a *surah* like it and call on anyone you can besides Allah, if you are telling the truth." (Surah Yunus: 38)

The Qur'an is the book in which Allah revealed the true religion: **Say: "If both humanity and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could never produce anything like it, even if they backed each other up." (Surat al-Isra': 88)**

2. Living the Qur'an's moral teachings at Every Moment

Do they then seek the judgment of the Time of Ignorance? Who could be better at giving judgment than Allah for people with certainty? (Surat al-Ma'ida: 50)

People will not please Allah or attain Paradise just by proclaiming their faith in the Qur'an; they must live their faith by making the Qur'an their guide and measure in all circumstances. In other words, if they know but do not practice, they fall into the following group: **"The metaphor of those who were charged with the Torah but then have not upheld it, is that of a donkey loaded with weighty tomes..."** (Surat al-Jumu'a: 5). What matters is to think every subject in the light of the Qur'an, and to reject every measure and criterion of the ignorant society that are incompatible with the Qur'an.

If something is to be criticized or commended, it must be done only insofar as it violates or agrees with the Qur'an. Believers must decide and act according to the Qur'an's guidance. Such a change in behavior does not happen overnight, for it takes time to learn what is required in the Qur'an and to live by them. Yet, what is important is to have the intention and be determined. What befalls to the person who communicates the Qur'an is to urge those who listen to him to embark upon this process of change and then try to help him by correcting him gently as he proceeds in his study of the Qur'an.

3. This world is a place of testing

When a person declares his or her intention to embrace Islam, he may consider himself becoming as members of the "People of Paradise." But to proclaim one's faith is only the first step in long period of training in the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, Allah describes believers as those who say, **"Our Lord is Allah" and then go straight..."** (Surah Fussilat: 30)

This true integrity will remain steady throughout all of the trials and frustrations that Allah will send to test their faith and bring them to maturity:

Do people imagine that they will be left to say: "We believe" and will not be tested? We tested those before them so that Allah would know the truthful and would know the liars. (Surat al-'Ankabut: 2-3)

The basic purpose for creating this transient and imperfect world and the life we live in it is to test us. In fact, this world is no more than a temporary "waiting room":

... He Who created death and life to test which of you is best in action. He is the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving. (Surat al-Mulk: 2)

The body a person has is also granted for the very same purpose:

We created humanity from a mingled drop to test him, and We made him hearing and seeing. (Surat al-Insan: 2)

People are tested by different means, one of the most important of which is the difficulties that Allah creates and sends to people. This is related in the Qur'an as follows:

We will test you with a certain amount of fear and hunger, loss of wealth, life, and fruits. But give good news to the steadfast. (Surat al-Baqara: 155)

The Qur'an contains many examples of how the prophets and messengers, or their followers, were tested. The reactions they received from their families or those around them, the threats and pressures they met, as well as the mockery and slander to which they were exposed, and their errors are all tests. The attitude expected of believers when confronted with such difficulties is to say, **"...beauty lies in showing steadfastness"** (Surah Yusuf: 18) and to persevere, never suspecting Allah's mercy and closeness for a moment and in the knowledge that all difficulties can be overcome with His help.

As well as difficulties, blessings are also sent to test man. With the blessings He grants, Allah tests a person's maturity and his devotion to Him.

The goal here is to prove that the believer is unfettered by facile arrogance on arriving at a level of well-being (this is a core feature of an unbelieving society). When such people acquire fame or fortune, they often become spoiled and feel pride, treating other people arrogantly and cruelly. Their hearts harden, and they turn their backs on Allah.

However, blessings are given not to be spoiled by them but to give thanks for them. Aware of this, a believer only uses, in the words of the Qur'an, "the attractions of this world" to earn Allah's approval. He does not make an effort to consume them. Nothing in his life has arisen by chance, and he is absolutely face to face with a situation by which he is tested. Someone aware of this fact is in possession of an important secret in the world. Due to this understanding, they will display the finest, the most honest, and the most rational behavior possible, all of which Allah will approve.

A person who comprehends that our Lord tests him in this short life also understands Islam's one of main foundations. For this reason, a person who receives the message should, in the first place, be made aware of this. That is because if he has sincerely believed, he would in a short while meet various difficulties and be tested in whether he is sincere in his faith.

4. Religious morality is easy and accords with human nature

In ignorant societies, traditions, customs, false beliefs, and many other non-religious elements have been incorporated into Islam. As a result a crooked model that is difficult to practice has emerged. When the deliberate propaganda carried out by those who oppose the religion are added to this

picture, a vast majority of people start to consider Islam as a religion that will put people into trouble. Yet this is a sheer deception, for Allah created humanity and as He states in the verse, **“Does He Who created not then know? He is the All-Pervading, the All-Aware”** (Surat al-Mulk: 14), He is the One Who knows best a person and his most intimate desires and needs. He created the religious morality in a most appropriate form. His purpose is not to make His servants miserable, but to enable them to know Him in the way most befitting their spirits, to serve Him, and to give them the joy of true salvation:

Strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has selected you and has not placed any constraint upon you in religion—the religion of your forefather Ibrahim. He named you Muslims before and also in this, so that the Messenger could be a witness against you and you could be witnesses against all humanity. So pray, give alms, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector—the Best Protector, the Best Helper. (Surat al-Hajj: 78)

In another verse, Allah says: **“We did not send down the Qur’an to you to make you miserable, but only as a reminder for those who have fear [of and respect for Allah]”** (Surah Ta Ha: 2-3). The purpose of Islam is to invite people to what is easy, give comfort, and bestow a life of well-being upon humanity. This comes from Allah’s mercy:

Allah desires to make things lighter for you. Man was created weak. (Surat an-Nisa’: 28)

This fact must absolutely be made very clear to the person who receives the message. This way, one of the pretexts one’s lower self employs to stay away from the morality of religion will be eliminated. When explaining how easy it is to live by the religious morality, the errors of the religious morality learned while one was ignorant of it must be exposed, and any myths thought to be part of Islam must be removed from the listener’s mind.

5. Religion liberates

The ignorant society thinks that religion is *difficult*, *oppressive*, and *restrictive*. According to this erroneous rationale, religion imposes certain restrictions upon people and thus limits their freedom. Those who consider themselves as *liberals* in this society distance themselves from religious morality as much as possible. They even engage in a fight against the religion.

But the truth is otherwise. Religion brings freedom, whereas the absence of religion brings oppression and slavery.

In order to understand this truth, one must understand human nature in its true sense. Allah makes the essence of this matter in the Qur'an and explains in the Surat ash-Shams that the spirit of human is of *two sides*:

By the Sun and its morning brightness, and the Moon when it follows it, and the day when it displays it, and the night when it conceals it, and the sky and what erected it, and Earth and what extended it, and the soul and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or belief, he who purifies it has succeeded, [whereas] he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 1-10)

These verses reveal that when Allah created human beings, He inspired each soul evil as well as how to avoid from it, that is good. Salvation from evil depends upon one's choice to avoid evil. Otherwise he faces destruction. If a person does not accept the existence of evil in his lower self, he lacks the conscience to avoid from evil. In the words of the Qur'an, he "covers" that evil and nurtures it. Eventually that evil consumes him.

Acknowledgement of the existence of evil in the lower self and avoidance from it brings a person salvation. Freedom is precisely this salvation.

The main power that puts a person under pressure is the evil in his lower self. This pressure predominates any other known power. It smothers people in selfishness, makes them jealous, insecure, and worried about the future. But worst of all, this power overwhelms them with endless desires and passions and drives them to amass more possessions, more money and greater social status. However these desires are insatiable. The passion to become rich is strong; but, when it is satisfied, other passions follow, entrapping that person in a vicious cycle.

Salvation lies in being released from this cycle. Allah relates in the Qur'an:

...It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own souls who are successful. (Surat al-Hashr: 9)

People who are no longer enslaved to these passions become free. At this point, their purpose in life is no longer to satisfy these endless passions; rather, it is to please only Allah, the true purpose for humanity's creation in the first place.

True freedom is being Allah's servant and liberating from everything other than Allah. For this reason, Imran's (as) wife prayed:

"...O my Lord, I have pledged to You what is in my womb, devoting it to Your service. Please accept my prayer. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (Surah Al 'Imran: 35)

For the very same reason, Ibrahim (as) asked his father:

"... O father, why do you worship what can neither hear nor see and is not of any use to you at all?" (Surah Maryam: 42)

The prophets and messengers urged people to abandon their lower selves' passions, to cease being slaves to other people, and to serve Allah alone. By saving themselves from these unnatural (in the sense of being against their inherent human nature) goals, they become free. Thus the Messenger is described in the Qur'an as the person **"relieving them [the believers] of their heavy loads and the chains that were around them"** (Surat al-A'raf : 157).

That is why contrary to common belief of the ignorant society, Islam does not oppress people but actually liberates them. People who are not familiar with Islam must understand this Islamic definition of "freedom" so that their minds can be cleared of the myths and later accretions found in their society's religion, all of which make them think that religion is oppressive.

Since Islam is liberating, the methods used to communicate it can by no means be oppressive:

So remind them [O Muhammad]. You are only a reminder. You are not in control of them. (Surat al-Ghashiyya: 21-22)

There is no compulsion in religion. Right guidance has become clearly distinct from error. Anyone who rejects false deities and believes in Allah has grasped the Firmest Handhold, which will never give way. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Surat al-Baqara: 256)

It should be made clear to the person in question that neither Islam nor the Muslims communicating the message will exert any pressure upon them, that this is contrary to the morality of the Qur'an and that this is a morality that does not please Allah. In this way, any concerns arising from ignorance and an obstacle in communicating the message are removed.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

The methods of communicating the message is just as important as the content of the communication. Those spreading Islam should not limit their efforts to reciting Qur'anic verses one after another, explaining matters of religion, and urging one to have faith. Rather, they must calculate the most effective manner and style to employ. This includes observing the other person's reactions to what is being told. If this reaction is one of confusion, the method should be changed.

Of course, it is also possible that the person will persist in denial. In this case, the believer has to consider how long to pursue this effort, when to stop, and what to do next. The Qur'an is a believer's guide in all of these matters, for the Prophet changed his methods according to circumstances and characters of people he met.

1. Identifying the person appropriate for the communication

Believers must first realize that those whom they are addressing may not come to faith right away. The education they have gone through or the influence of the people around them may lead them to show negative reactions, to the extent of refusing to listen. For this reason, those who want to spread Allah's message should primarily select conscientious people who are inherently inclined to Islam. There is no urgency to talk with those who are arrogant or hostile toward religion. Allah relates in the Qur'an thus:

You will not make dead people hear and you will not make deaf people hear the call when they turn their backs in flight. You will not guide blind people out of their error. You will not make anyone hear except for those who have faith in Our Signs and so are Muslims. (Surat an-Naml: 80-81)

In another verse, Allah reveals the difference between those who will come to faith and those who will not:

The Word has been justly carried out against most of them, so they have no faith. We have put iron collars around their necks reaching up to the chin so that their heads are forced back. We have placed a barrier in front of them and a barrier behind them, blindfolding them so that they cannot see. It makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe. You can only warn those who act on the Reminder and fear [and respect] the All-Merciful in the Unseen. Give them the good news of forgiveness and a generous reward. (Surah Ya Sin: 7-11)

When believers decide to talk about Islam with others, they should consider these criteria. If they see no sign of a sincere conscience in those to whom they are talking, insistence on communicating the message will become a waste of time. As Allah underlines in many verses of the Qur'an, majority of people will not come to faith. Since this is the case, believers should seek out these rare individuals whose hearts are inclined to believe and then call them to faith.

2. Continuing the communication until an assessment can be made about the individual.

According to the above criteria, if a person seems to be inclined toward faith, communication may begin. During this encounter, the hearer's reactions, interpretations, and responses will reveal his or her attitude toward religion. Therefore, if the person shows no signs of sincerity, communication must continue until an assessment can be made about the person in question. If, at

this point, it is understood that the person has no inclination towards the morality of the Qur'an, then the believers leave that person so that they can devote their precious time on more useful pursuits and activities of communication.

Remember that success of a believer cannot be measured by whether or not the person embraces Islam, for only Allah can lead people to the right path. Success can be measured only by whether his or her effort has been totally pleasing to Allah. Ending this effort if necessary and moving on to more useful work is also pleasing to Allah. As in the case of Prophet Hud who told the following to his people, believers should turn their backs to people who resist faith:

[Hud said:] “If you turn your backs, I have transmitted to you what I was sent to you with, and my Lord will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. My Lord is the Preserver of everything.” (Surah Hud: 57)

3. Assessing the hearer's attitude and sincerity

Believers must frequently make an assessment of the unbelievers' reactions to what they are being told. Sometimes it will be necessary to alter the conversation's content, style, and intensity according to the person's spiritual state and ability to understand. This could provide a degree of flexibility to make the message more appropriate to those being addressed. In addition, this would allow the believer to measure the other person's sincerity or openness to the message before continuing. However, if the other person's attitude is thought to be the result of an ulterior motive (e.g., worldly gain) or insincerity, then this effort should cease.

In the Qur'an Allah tells us that Prophet Sulayman (as) used to observe the person's reaction and then present the next topic accordingly. When sending a letter to the Queen of Sheba via Hudhud, a member of his army, he gave this command:

“Take this letter of mine, deliver it to them, and then withdraw for a little and see how they respond.” (Surat an-Naml: 28)

4. Not to make offers regarding worship before the person strengthens in his faith

It should primarily be ensured that those who are newly introduced to the religion believe in Allah and the Hereafter. In order to fulfill the requirements of religious morality, they must be able to grasp its rationale and perform these acts of worship willingly and consciously. Otherwise, they will simply imitate others without understanding what they are doing or may choose not to do them at all. Thus, it is important to bring such people to a certain level of understanding of Islam and make them desire to worship Allah as He

commands. In this process, no recommendations about worship may be given until the person asks specific questions or acquires a certain understanding. Indeed, a person who has sincere faith in Allah and the Hereafter will desire to perform the acts of worship revealed by Allah in the Qur'an himself.

5. Creating a sense of the believer's power and grandeur

Unbelieving societies have a mistaken idea that religion speaks only to the poor. This is fallacy, for Islam calls all people to the path of Allah, our Lord. However sometimes, "actual" examples are required to demolish this fallacy. Muslims, blessed with the world's most striking beauties, power and grandeur, who live by the morality of Islam and use these blessings for religion set the best examples to eliminate the prejudices of unbelievers.

People tend to admire power, wealth, and splendor. That is why most people avoid Muslims who are morally upright and sincere but have no power; but instead admire and try to emulate coarse, immoral people just because of their wealth. But this "psychological" advantage of the unbelievers may benefit the believers when they are seen to be richer and more splendid than the unbelievers.

This is one of the reasons why the Qur'an emphasizes Sulayman's (as) power and wealth and how he used them to communicate the faith. The Qur'an describes the Queen of Sheba's submission and how greatly she was affected by his wealth:

She was told: "Enter the courtyard." But when she saw it, she supposed it to be a pool and bared her legs. He said: "It is a courtyard paved with glass." She said: "O my Lord, I have wronged myself, but I have submitted with Sulayman to the Lord of all the worlds." (Surat an-Naml: 44)

To use the blessings that Allah has given as a means to familiarize people with the Qur'an's moral teachings is an act of worship. This was the purpose of several works of art commissioned by Sulayman (as). Following in his path, other believers may also use their power and wealth as effective means to acquaint people with religion.

6. Asking the people for their opinions

Remember that communication is not just "giving information." Those who seek to communicate the message must know other people's ideas, answer their questions, and provide proof to remove any mental reservations. For this reason, they must frequently ask what the hearers are thinking and, if no progress is being made, change the topic or adopt a new style.

When we look at the prophets' and the messengers' methods, we see that they questioned those who were listening to them. For example, Shu'ayb

(as) asked: **“O my people, what do you think?”** (Surah Hud: 88). Ibrahim (as) followed this same technique:

We gave Ibrahim his right guidance early on, and We had complete knowledge of him. When he asked his father and his people: “What are these statues you are clinging to?” they replied: “We found our fathers worshipping them.” He said: “You and your fathers are clearly misguided.” They asked: “Have you brought us the truth, or are you playing games?” He said: “Far from it! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and Earth, He who brought them into being. I am one of those who bear witness to that. By Allah, I will devise some scheme against your idols when your backs are turned.” He broke them in pieces, except for the largest one, so that they would have it to consult! They said: “Who has done this to our gods? He is definitely one of the wrongdoers!” They said: “We heard a young man mentioning them. They call him Ibrahim.” They ordered: “Bring him before the people’s eyes so they can be witnesses.” They asked: “Did you do this to our deities, Ibrahim?” He said: “No, this one, the largest of them, did it. Ask them, if they are able to speak!” They consulted among themselves and said [to each other]: “It is you yourselves who are wrongdoers.” But then they relapsed back into their unbelief [after having said to each other]: “You know full well these idols cannot talk.” He told them: “Do you then worship, instead of Allah, what cannot help or harm you in any way? Shame on you and what you worship besides Allah! Will you not use your intellect?” (Surat al-Anbiya’: 51-67)

Believers must ask questions from time to time to judge how effective their words have been, to determine what points should be emphasized, and to follow the progression of the hearer’s thoughts. They must record this progress and learn what those who are listening think of what they have been told. In this way, the believers will be able to assess the other party’s sincerity and determine how to proceed.

7. Employing the most effective method conforming to the person’s character

Apart from the truth of the message, effective communication depends on the way it is addressed: **“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair admonition...” (Surat an-Nahl: 125).**

This can be achieved by emphasizing a particular point and using interesting and relevant examples. Aside from this, since everyone has a different character and different needs, the believers have to tailor their styles and methods to make them effective. For example, sometimes it might be

useful to use detailed examples or a concise narrative style. Through these methods, each believer should try to determine the listener's level of comprehension and emotional state and adapt the method and manner of communication as necessary.

8. Leading a person to think

Asking questions may also lead people to think about particular topics. This is a very effective method for the communication of the message.

The most salient feature of unbelievers is that they do not know how to "think," as thinking is defined in the Qur'an. They do not think about the meaning of life, but only about how to make money and put up appearances. They do not think about some basic faith-related issues the origin of the universe, who created their bodies, where a person goes after death, and other spiritual matters. Their thoughts are generally concentrated on their own personal gain.

Thus, those who are interested in Islam must be taught how to think, for that is the only way they will be able to see their society's faults and errors and, as a result, grasp Islam's basic tenets. When they can think, they can question their own ideas and beliefs, see where the deficiencies lie, and begin to feel discontented with their situation. This will lead them to search for what is right and true. In the Qur'an, Allah teaches people how to think and ask questions, and shows them what things they should think about:

Say: "What do you think? If Allah took away your hearing and your sight and sealed up your hearts, what deity is there, other than Allah, who could give them back to you?" Look how We vary the Signs, yet still they turn away! (Surat al-An'am: 46)

Say: "Who provides for you out of heaven and Earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who directs the whole affair?" They will reply: "Allah." Say: "So will you not guard against evil?" That is Allah, your Lord, the Truth. And what is there after truth except misguidance? So how have you been distracted?" (Surah Yunus: 31-32)

Urging them to think, Prophet Ibrahim (as) also made his people find the perversion they are in:

Recite to them the story of Ibrahim, when he asked his father and his people: "What do you worship?" They replied: "We worship idols and will continue to cling to them." He asked: "Do they hear you when you call, or do they help you or do you harm?" They said: "No, but this is what we found our fathers doing." (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 69-74)

Since whether or not to believe is left to people's own free will, believers are duty-bound to help other people think about the truth. In order to perceive what is right in a particular matter, people must first think about it. For this reason, believers will communicate in a way that will lead other people to think.

9. Removing the influence of forefathers' religion

There is a tendency in many people to conform to old traditions and follow the customs of their ancestors. If these traditions and customs accord with the Qur'an, there is no problem. However, if these practices violate the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam—which is often the case—then Allah bans them. The Qur'an is the guide for all Muslims; any traditions and rules that conflict with it contain no truth, regardless of who established them:

When they are told: "Follow what Allah has sent down," they say: "No, we will follow what we found our fathers doing." What! Even if satan is calling them to the punishment of the Blazing Fire? (Surah Luqman: 21)

People must be aware of this fact. Thus, they must be urged to abandon their ancestral "religion" and accept the Qur'an's pure, unadulterated teachings. Otherwise, it becomes impossible for that person to understand and practice Islam.

10. Defining the life of ignorance and undoing its effects

The spiritual poverty of the society from which the person comes is one of the beneficial subjects that should be explained to the person to whom the message is communicated. This way s/he can compare the perfection of the morality of Islam with their own society's distorted beliefs and practices and see the striking difference between them.

In societies that have remained distant to the morality of the Qur'an, the people's moral make-up and understanding of justice have totally collapsed. Chaos and uneasiness is rife, the crime rate increases, and injustice grows apace. Allah's messengers and prophets explained the danger of their situation and urged them not to overstep the boundaries that Allah has established for them. Comprehending that societal and personal hindrances will be removed by living by the Qur'an's teachings, and that the establishment of Allah's judgments will, by itself, eliminate the corruption rampant in the society is one of the important reasons that makes people feel closer to the religion.

While Yusuf (as) was in prison, two prisoners asked him to interpret their dreams. He replied:

... I have left the religion of a people who clearly have no faith in Allah and who refuse to acknowledge the truth of the world to come. I hold fast to the creed of my forebears Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Ya'qub. We do not associate anything with Allah. And that is how Allah has favored us and all of humanity. But most do not give thanks. My fellow prisoners, are many lords better or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror? What you serve apart from Him are only names that you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is, in truth, the straight and upright religion, but most people simply do not know.” (Surah Yusuf: 37-40)

Yusuf (as) told them about the idolatrous character of their society and asked, **“are many lords better or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror?”**. In this way, he revealed the great difference between idolatry and *tawhid* (the oneness of Allah). No doubt this knowledge can be provided in a very detailed manner. The idolatrous character may be described as selfish, greedy, opportunistic, unsophisticated, and crude, while the believers' noble characteristics can be described as just the opposite.

The injustice, pitilessness, falsity, and opportunism, the features peculiar to those who associate others with Allah are totally opposite to the *ideal* of Islam. Presenting such a contrast is very useful in getting people to abandon their mistaken worldview and replace it with the Islamic one. However, to be effective, the examples given must be from the person's own society.

11. Having control over the course of the conversation

Believers must never forget that the basic purpose of communication is to teach religious morality as a means to bring others to Islam. Unbelievers are generally inclined to turn the discussion to other areas. This is related to not being able to concentrate easily on religious topics, have an uneasy conscience, or not taking it seriously.

In this situation, believers must be very careful. Surely, it is meaningless to force someone who does not want to listen or feels bored to listen. In this situation, deliberately changing the topic, employing a different style, and giving the listener some time to relax will be useful. However, it would be a major mistake to allow the listeners to have control over the conversation and thereby have to deal with their unformed ideas and hypothetical questions. In short, believers should tell the listeners what is necessary and not what they want to hear. A good example is Yusuf's (as) *method* of talking to other prisoners:

Two servants entered prison along with him. One said (to Yusuf): “I dreamt I was pressing grapes.” The other said: “I dreamt I carried

bread upon my head and birds were eating it. Tell us the true meaning of these dreams. We see that you are one of the righteous.” He replied: “No meal to feed you will arrive before I have informed you what they [your dreams] mean. That is part of what my Lord taught me. For I have left the religion of a people who clearly have no faith in Allah and who refuse to acknowledge the truth of the world to come. I hold fast to the creed of my forebears Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Ya’qub. We do not associate anything with Allah. And that is how Allah has favored us and all humanity. But most people do not give thanks. My fellow prisoners, are many lords better or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror? What you serve apart from Him are only names that you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is, in truth, the straight and upright religion, but most people simply do not know. My fellow captives, one of you will serve his lord with wine, the other of you will be crucified and birds will eat his head. The thing you asked about is foreordained.” (Surah Yusuf: 36-41)

As we see, Yusuf (as) first presented religion and then answered their questions. If he had interpreted their dreams first, perhaps they would not have been interested in listening to what he said about religion. Musa (as) used a similar style when speaking to Pharaoh:

(Pharaoh) asked: “What about the previous generations?” He (Musa) replied: “Knowledge of them is with my Lord in a Book. My Lord does not misplace, nor does He forget.” It is He Who made Earth a cradle for you and threaded pathways for you through it, and sent down water from the sky by which We have brought forth different types of plants. (Surah Ta Ha: 51-53)

Just as Musa (as) and Yusuf (as) communicated the message intelligently, so believers must be intelligent, deliberate, and direct in their conversations. They must be in control of its general course and know how to direct it so that the listeners will not be able to divert it to other topics.

12. Waiting for a listener’s first reactions and choosing the appropriate method

One way to direct a conversation is to find out what the listener believes and then choose the most appropriate subject and style. This allows the presenter to learn what the listener already knows and to avoid giving useless information. The Qur’an describes how Musa (as) used this *delicate* technique:

The ruling circle of Pharaoh's people said: "This is certainly a skilled magician who desires to expel you from your land, so what do you recommend?" They replied: "Detain him and his brother, and send out marshals to the cities to bring you all of the skilled magicians." The magicians came to Pharaoh and asked: "Will we receive a reward if we are the winners?" He said: "Yes, and you will be among those brought near." They asked: "Musa, will you throw first or shall we be the ones to throw?" He said: "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. We revealed to Musa: "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place, and what they did was shown to be false. They were defeated then and there, transformed into humbled men. (Surat al-A'raf: 109-119)

Musa (as) applied this efficient *technique* by telling Pharaoh's magicians to *throw first*. This is also a method that can be employed by anyone who follows in the footsteps of messengers. By asking the other party's views first, making him lay down what he believes and thinks and then devising the most suitable approach and style will be more efficient in destroying the false views s/he entertains.

13. Employing a style that hinders the person from erroneous behaviors

Commending what is good and avoiding what is evil is an important act of worship commanded in various verses of the Qur'an. It is clear that the content of this command also relates to those to whom Islam is introduced. Believers not only "command what is good" but also make them "avoid what is evil."

Their attitudes and thoughts should be corrected by explaining what is erroneous about them. In case they persist in acting inappropriately, the believers may adopt a style of conversation that will embarrass them.

14. Indirect communication

In dialogues, a style of address aimed at the listener's personality is generally employed. As a method of communication, however, in addition to that style, a third party may be addressed and other accounts given, again in such a way that the person in question is still informed of the message wishing to be communicated. This may enable the first listener to better understand the message being presented. This is a useful method that prevents the appearance of a possible tension between the listener and the one communicating the message and keeps listeners from becoming defensive and closing their ears.

15. Making people using their conscience and be sensitive

The purpose of communication is not only to teach or impart information; rather, it is more important to create an impression in the listeners' conscience and lead them to undertake a sincere critique of their inner self. This requires a sincere, warm-hearted dialogue between the two people and a style that is guiding instead of instructive. For example, after Ibrahim (as) talked with his people, the prominent unbelievers were forced to examine their conscience:

He broke them in pieces, except for the largest one, so that they would have it to consult! They said: "Who has done this to our deities? He is definitely one of the wrongdoers!" They said: "We heard a young man mentioning them. They call him Ibrahim." They ordered them: "Bring him before the people's eyes so they can be witnesses." They asked: "Did you do this to our gods, Ibrahim?" He said: "No, this one, the largest of them, did it. Ask them, if they are able to speak!" They consulted among themselves and said: "It is you yourselves who are wrongdoers." (Surat al-Anbiya': 58-64)

We can see from this story that a person's conscience is his or her inner guide. As long as people follow their conscience, they will act correctly. This is the essence of religious morality. Allah uses people's conscience to inspire them to behave in a way that pleases Him. For this reason, if there is any hindrance to a person's learning and practicing religious morality (e.g., being afraid of others' reactions, reluctance to give up old habits, etc.), these obstacles must be removed so that the person can obey his or her conscience.

16. Enabling a person to think freely

Freedom of thought is absolutely necessary for people to see the truth and make a right decision. To do this, they must be able to give up wrong ideas and embrace the truth. In this process, there must be no intellectual pressure and the mind must be free of bigotry. This cannot happen in an unbelieving environment, and new learners of religious morality must be informed of those things that impede free thought so that they can be removed. This will help produce a comfortable environment conducive to effective communication.

17. Not using force or pressure

Those who are spreading religion are not entitled to force listeners to believe, to make them embrace their views. Their only responsibility is to present Allah's religion; Allah will give faith and lead unbelievers to the true path. Indeed Allah relates in the Qur'an thus:

So remind them! You are only a reminder. You are not in control of them. (Surat al-Ghashiyya: 21-22)

If your Lord had willed, all people on Earth would have had faith. Do you think you can force people to believe? (Surah Yunus: 99)

Refraining from the use of pressure and allowing listeners to believe what they want will show that the preachers are trustworthy and are not pursuing their own advantage. This will only add credence to their expression.

18. Remedying indifference

Though it apparently seems the easiest, listeners who are indifferent are the hardest people to talk about religion with, for it is impossible to find out what they really think. Remaining silent or without showing any reaction, they appear to confirm what is being said. Yet they innerly do not accept, and simply remain indifferent. Someone insisting on the opposite view at least shows some reactions. They can be convinced after some talk. However the situation of an indifferent people is more complex. In order to arouse their interest, aside from general style of conversing, very efficient styles should be employed. For example, believers may speak of death and remind them that they will one day rot in the grave. Or they may speak of the vagueness and meaninglessness of those things that unbelievers consider important. Such topics may spark some interest, and such a style may make them more sensitive to what they are being told.

19. Treat everyone properly

In the communication of Allah's message to different communities, His messengers employed styles conforming to the attitudes their people had towards them. Sometimes they spoke gently; other times they were relatively severe and threatened their people with Allah's punishment. Indeed, depending on their attitude to the religion and believers, Allah commands believers to treat people differently. For example, it is necessary to be severe with hypocrites, unbelievers, and those who oppose the Qur'an (Surat at-Tawba: 73). On the other hand, protection should be offered to an idolater who asks for mercy and safety (Surat at-Tawba: 6). Accordingly, a believer who communicates Allah's message may employ a style and attitude that addresses the non-Muslims' approach towards the religion and believers. The style and the choice of topics should be tailored to fit the hearers' dispositions, because they will be influenced according to their specific needs. Some people may need polite words whereas others may be influenced by strong language. This is similar to a doctor who prescribes an operation, aspirin or an injection, depending on the situation of his patient.

20. Telling about the destruction of former societies

One of the things that lead people to deny Allah's existence is the strange idea that they will live forever. Young people think that they will always be young, or at least that they will remain young for a long time. Middle-aged people console themselves with the idea that death is still far off. Their society deepens this deception, for its magnificent buildings, beautiful art works, houses, cars, and much else gives them the impression that life is permanent and enduring.

Actually, this deception, which is no more than satan's intimation of eternity, is only another example of the first and greatest deception: The sin that caused Adam (as) and Eve to be expelled from Paradise was a result of satan's whispering: **"... Shall I show you the way to the Tree of Everlasting Life and to a kingdom that will never fade away?"** (Surah Ta Ha: 120).

For this reason, those who are being called to faith must be saved from this great delusion. They must be shown that their civilization is not permanent and enduring, for everything exists by Allah's will and will disappear in a moment, like an image in a dream, if He so wills. They must know that all life is a manifestation of Allah, as the "Life Giver," that He created in a weak and transient nature.

The story of former societies destroyed by Allah may be told in order to erase these mistaken beliefs. Many mighty peoples and magnificent civilizations have been totally destroyed because they did not obey Allah's commands:

Have they not seen how many generations We destroyed before them whom We had established on Earth far more firmly than We have established you? We sent down heaven upon them in abundant rain and made rivers flow under them. But We destroyed them for their wrong actions and raised up further generations after them. (Surat al-An'am: 6)

Allah destroyed societies that rejected the religion and mistreated His prophets and messengers: **"They denied him, and the punishment of the Day of Shadow came down on them. It was indeed the punishment of a terrible Day"** (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 189) and **"We have never destroyed a city without giving it prior warning as a reminder. We were never unjust."** (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 208-209).

When hearers learn about these destroyed civilizations and see their ruins, and when they are told that Allah could destroy their society any time He willed, the supports they trusted upon other than Allah will be largely

undermined. They get the sense that their powerful civilizations and technologies are, in fact, nothing, that people are servants of Allah, and that there is no other power to be feared and respected other than Him.

21. Keeping death in mind

In any society, no topic is more basic and thought provoking than death. However although people witness other people's death, they rarely think about their inevitable end. Instead, they prefer to avoid thinking about it by trying to convince themselves that they will never die. They never mention it and spend their lives in great heedlessness:

Say: "Death, from which you are fleeing, will certainly catch up with you. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He will inform you about what you did." (Surat al-Jumu'a: 8)

On the other hand, believers often think about death and, knowing that they will give an account of their deeds, act in a way that pleases Allah. For those who are starting to learn about religious morality and coming to know Allah, the knowledge that they may die at any time and place raise their awareness and cause them to live a pure and religiously moral life.

Thus, it is essential to make people think about death, as it will make them understand the transitory nature of life and embrace the religion.

22. Describing the helplessness of human beings

People who do not measure Allah with His true measure cannot grasp their own nature. Unable to conceive of Allah's greatness and power, they cannot know their own helplessness. Such superficial people flatter themselves, thinking that they have made everything themselves, have power and other qualities that belong only to Allah. In other words, they look at everything from this distorted angle. Thus, it is necessary to explain to them that they are weak and helpless creatures made of flesh and blood who can die of a simple blood clot; have bad breath; whose eyes, ears, and nose get dirty; and who has to go to the toilet. Moreover, they must be made aware that Allah has all power and might, created each person, watches over, protects them, and gives them their daily bread. They must know that Allah has given them whatever they think they own, for all of their possessions really belong to Him. In short, they must come to understand Allah's greatness and their own helplessness:

O humanity! You are the poor and in need of Allah, whereas Allah is the Rich Beyond Need, the Praiseworthy. (Surah Fatir: 15)

DIFFERENT METHODS OF COMMUNICATING RELIGION

1. Combined oral and written presentations

Sulayman (as) wrote a letter introducing religion to the Queen of Sheba (Surat an-Naml: 28). To inform people about Allah's religion in today's world, written communication is absolutely necessary. For this purpose, letters can be sent and books, newspaper, and magazine articles can be written singly or as a series. This method is effective, since being permanent, books and articles can be read and reread.

2. Mass communication

As well as presenting religion to the leaders of society, Musa (as) brought all the people together to tell them about Allah's religion (Surah Ta Ha: 59 and Surat ash-Shu'ara': 39). Today, believers must use all methods of mass communication (e.g., press, radio, television, letters, books, and the Internet) to reach all segments of society.

3. Introducing religion to a society's leaders and ruling circle

Allah's prophets and messengers are especially concerned to present religion to the society's leaders and the ruling circle, because such people have power and authority. Therefore, opening a dialogue with these people is an important way of introducing religion to them.

4. Preparing to introduce religion

The Qur'an tells us that those who desire to further the Way of Allah must first prepare themselves:

If they had really desired to go out (to fight), they would have made proper preparations for it. But Allah was averse to their setting out, so He held them back and they were told: "Stay behind with those who stay behind." (Surat at-Tawba: 46)

The believers' most important work today is disseminating information about religion. However, before they can do this successfully, they need to prepare themselves. There are two aspects to this: (1) preparing for written communication. This involves deciding which books and newspapers to use, establishing a plan of action to make the best use of special written information, and fundraising and (2) educating and preparing themselves, both morally and intellectually, to communicate Allah's religion.

5. Developing expertise in presenting religion

Believers must also divide the work into suitable portions:

It is not necessary for the believers to go out all together. If a party from each group of them were to go out so they could increase their knowledge of the religion, they would be able to notify their people when they returned to them so that, hopefully, they would take heed. (Surat at-Tawba: 122)

Every believer is expected to communicate the religion, and every assembly of believers is also an assembly of communicators. Many tasks have to be done to realize this goal, and each one will make a person a better and more effective communicator.

To be a skilled communicator of religion, believers must be well educated, have a thorough knowledge of the Qur'an, and have developed speaking and writing skills, all of which will result in better communication of religion.

THE COMMUNICATOR'S QUALITIES

1. The knowledge that faith is Allah's gift

Believers who present religion to others must realize that only Allah puts a person on the right path and brings him or her to faith, that only He decides who will believe and who will not. As He told the Prophet (saas): **You cannot guide those you would like to, but Allah guides those He wills. He has best knowledge of the guided** (Surat al-Qasas: 56).

Believers prepare themselves to communicate Allah's religion by developing expertise in many areas; this is their act of worship. However, guidance becomes possible only by Allah's will Who holds control over a person's heart. This knowledge also helps believers to be more comfortable and sincere, both of which add to their effectiveness.

2. Openness and sincerity

Allah judges believers on the basis of their sincerity. For this reason, sincerity is one of the Qur'an's principle themes. Sincerity is an important feature that brings believers closer to Allah, improves their ability to communicate religion and makes them successful in this endeavor. Believers should communicate the message, aware that Allah guides people to the right path and that the believers' sole task is only to communicate. While communicating the message, a similar candid and open style is essential.

3. Patience

Patience is the surest sign that a person's faith is sincere. Despite all hindrances and adversities, believers keep trying to please Allah. In the Qur'an Allah stresses the importance of patience in many places, among them:

So be steadfast. Allah's promise is true. Do not let those who have no certainty make you impatient and shake your firmness. (Surat ar-Rum: 60)

Spreading Islam is one of the major areas in which believers show their patience. As long as believers see the light of faith in another person, they must be understanding and allow the other party to improve his or her views of Islam and the Qur'anic moral values. They must be patient with that person's wrong actions and ideas and fatuous conversations, as well as with his or her lack of understanding of the good that is being offered. But believers take great pleasure in doing this, because it is important for them to be the means whereby even one person's heart is softened toward Islam.

Believers may experience a reaction from unbelievers, both as individuals or as a group. But they must continue spreading the religion despite all the difficulties and lack of results. For example, Nuh (as) lived for 950 years (Surat Al-'Ankabut: 14) and spent centuries telling his people about religion. In fact, he is one of the greatest examples of patience. According to the Qur'an, Nuh (as) told his people:

He said: "My Lord, I have called my people night and day, but my calling has only made them more evasive. Indeed, every time I called them to Your forgiveness, they put their fingers in their ears, wrapped themselves up in their clothes, and were overweeningly arrogant. Then I called them openly. Then I addressed them publicly and addressed them privately. I said: 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly, He is Endlessly Forgiving.'" (Surah Nuh: 5-10)

4. The art of speaking wisely

The ability to speak well, that is, speaking to the point, expressing the issue's essence, saying only what is necessary, being convincing and pleasing, and having the ability to influence others is an art. Allah has given this special ability to His beloved servants. For example, He says of David (as): **We made his kingdom strong and gave him wisdom and decisive speech** (Surah Sad: 20). In another verse, He explains this art in the following words:

He gives wisdom to whoever He wills, and he who has been given wisdom has been given great good. But no one pays heed but people of intelligence. (Surat al-Baqara: 269)

Those who call people to religion must be able to speak well: **Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair admonition...** (Surat an-Nahl: 125). Therefore, believers must pray to Allah and, in addition, think as much as they can about this matter and assess themselves. The main aspects of effective communication are clear:

Those who call others to Islam must determine the other party's needs and provide the clearest and most effective answers. While speaking, they should avoid having an imposing and ambiguous style. Without engaging in an artificial effort to show knowledge, employing a clear and plain style that will comfort the listener's heart, that is, speaking wisely is a very important feature of a person who communicates Allah's message.

The believers' effectiveness in this area can be judged according to their mastery of the Qur'an. Allah tells us that the Qur'an has an answer for every distortion put forward by the unbelievers: **They bring you no similitude, but We bring you the truth and the best of explanations (as against it)** (Surat al-Furqan: 33). Based on their knowledge of the Qur'an, they sift through

it to find an interpretation of an event, answer questions, and counter logical distortions in a concise and effective way.

5. Strength, nobility, and modesty

A believer is a person to whom Allah has breathed His spirit into, with whom He is pleased and exalted above all created beings. No matter how physically and materially strong unbelievers may seem, believers have an insuperable superiority over them. This is related in the verse: **Do not give up and do not be downhearted. You shall be uppermost if you are believers** (Surah Al 'Imran: 139). If a believer continuously feels this superiority, he reflects it in his attitudes, which also naturally impresses others.

A believer who serves only Allah also has a morality similar to the character and morality of prophets. He has no weakness and his sole goal is to earn Allah's pleasure. Thanks to his maturity endowed to him by faith and his great goals he always have noble thoughts. Therefore, he does not engage in anything base or humiliating. This nobility, together with his candid and pleasant manner, leaves a positive impression over those who want to learn about religious morality.

THE PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO THE MESSENGERS

1. Their views of religion, unbelief, anger, and expectation of miracles

When Allah is mentioned on His own, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink back shuddering. But when others apart from Him are mentioned, they jump for joy. (Surat az-Zumar: 45)

The reactions of prominent unbelievers to the righteous religion communicated to them usually consist of violence, over-reaction, anger, arrogance, and so on. Believers should be aware of their attributes and what kind of reactions they may receive from unbelievers while communicating their message. Believers can learn these from the verses in the Qur'an. Being prepared against them is a sound step towards success.

Unbelievers generally want to see a miracle in order to believe. In the Qur'an this wish is described as follows:

The unbelievers ask: "Why has a Sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Allah misguides whoever He wills and guides to Himself all who turn to Him." (Surat ar-Ra'd: 27)

Unbelievers want to see miracles. In order to believe, they absolutely want to see such miracles. However, for those who can use their intelligence miracles abound everywhere.

For example, if someone says that "there is a stone suspended in the air," that would be a great miracle. But what they fail to realize is that the billions of tons that make up our planet have been hanging in the vacuum of space ever since it was created. However, it was not simply left there to hang without purpose; it revolves in a perfect orbit around the Sun.

The wondrous power of attraction among atoms is also a miracle, as is the fact that the far-distant Sun can warm Earth and be a means of life for all creatures. The fact that there is a reason for these things does not diminish their miraculous character, because that reason is also a miracle. But such things do not affect those who fail to see the proofs of Allah's power.

In the Qur'an, Allah tells us how the unbelievers look for miracles:

They say: "We will not believe you until you make a spring gush out from the ground for us; or have a garden of dates and grapes through which you make rivers come pouring; or make the sky, as you claim, fall down on us in lumps; or bring Allah and the angels here as a

guarantee; or possess a house built out of gleaming gold; or ascend up into heaven - and even then we will not believe in your ascent unless you bring us down a book to read! ...” (Surat al-Isra’: 90-93)

But their desire to see miracles is not sincere; if they experience a miracle, their hearts will not be satisfied and they will not come to faith. They only want to see a miracle to support their idea that the Prophet (saas) cannot perform miracles and, therefore, they are not obliged to believe.

Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only exclaim: “Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!” (Surat al-Hijr: 14-15)

Even if We were to send down a book to you on parchment pages and they were actually to touch it with their own hands, the unbelievers would still say: “This is nothing but downright magic.” (Surat al-An’am: 7)

Another reaction of unbelievers is to reject what they have been told and accuse the Prophet (saas) and the believers of being liars. We will deal with these accusations in chapter three.

Unbelievers who have *grave doubts* (Surah Hud) about Islam have a materialist viewpoint and reject the reality of the Hereafter. About them, Allah says: **(They said”) “What is there but our life in this world? We die and we live, and we will not be raised again”** (Surat al-Muminun: 37).

Instead of thinking about the believers’ words, they try to find inconsistencies in them and to dismiss the message through word games. They also try to humiliate the believers, such as when they asked Nuh (as): **“Why should we believe you, when [only] the vilest people follow you?”** (Surat ash-Shu’ara’: 111).

Allah tells us about these people in another verse:

When they are told: “Believe in the way that the people believe,” they exclaim: “What! Are we to believe in the way that fools believe?” No indeed! They are the fools, but they do not know it. (Surat al-Baqara: 13)

Their emotional and excessive reaction, which they openly display by insulting the intelligence of those believers who invite them to practice religious morality, shows how really base they are. Nuh (as) tells about the reaction of such people:

(Nuh said: “My Lord,) indeed, every time I called them to Your forgiveness, they put their fingers in their ears, wrapped themselves up in their clothes, and were overweeningly arrogant.” (Surah Nuh: 7)

We can see that unbelievers have various reactions to what they are told; however, none of their reactions are respectful or mature. As we shall now see, these reactions are sometimes beyond the pale of acceptable behavior.

2. Threats and violence

The most negative reactions come from those referred to in the Qur'an as the "ruling circle of society lapsed into unbelief." These *prominent people*, who exercise economic and political power, realize that the religion being preached threatens their vested interests and continued dominance.

The Qur'an tells us that one of their main characteristics is that they are **"the affluent..." (Surat az-Zukhruf: 23)**. And yet they want even more wealth and possessions, and so feverishly put forth every effort to pile up more: **"He thinks his wealth will make him live for ever" (Surat al-Humaza: 3)**. No doubt, satan plants this idea in their minds **by showing the way to the Tree of Everlasting Life and to a kingdom that will never fade away (Surah Ta Ha: 120)**. Given that such people have fallen under satan's influence and have become his "squadron," one can easily understand why they are so hostile to the believers.

The Qur'an also tells us about those who seek to divert believers from the true path:

And likewise in every city We set up its greatest wrongdoers to plot in it. They plot against themselves alone, but they are not aware of it. (Surat al-An'am: 123)

Allah tells us about the traps and assaults organized by satan's "prominent friends." For example, those who plotted Musa's (as) death were prominent men of the city (Surat al-Qasas: 20) who also undertook to provoke the people's rejection of him by calling him a "skilled magician" (Surat al-A'raf 109). In the next verse, they sought to provoke a public reaction by proclaiming his preaching to be a threat and a matter of state by saying: **"(He) desires to expel you from your land."** With the people already under their influence, they imposed the death penalty on him for stirring up strife by asking them: "So, what do you recommend?"

As Allah tells us in Surat al-A'raf 123, Pharaoh asked the people if they believed in Allah before he authorized them to do so. He wanted to transform an ordinary event into a case of incitement and plotting against the city in order to convince the people that the death penalty was justified. Seeing that the magicians disagreed, he tried to impose the death penalty on them too.

Are you going to leave Musa and his people to cause corruption in the land and abandon you and your deities? (Surat al-A'raf: 127)

As these prominent citizens had taken satan as their protector and followed in his footsteps, they regarded it as their duty to oppose the believers. The Qur'an speaks of these friends of satan as *the party of Iblis* or *satan's brothers*:

... The satans inspire their friends to dispute with you... (Surat al-An'am: 121)

Actually, satan has taken the unbelievers under his control and incites them to oppose the believers. He creates groundless misgivings within them to hinder and even prevent Islam's spread and gradual ascendancy. To achieve his goal, he forms a squad composed of those who accept him as their guide and directs it according to his will.

Do you not see that We send the satans against those who do not believe to goad them on? (Surah Maryam: 83)

Thus, those who have lapsed into unbelief, following satan and their own prominent citizens, work against the believers.

Naturally, a religious morality that accords with human nature will gain mass appeal and acceptance by being communicated to people. But those members of the "ruling circle who have lapsed into unbelief" try to hinder the believers and messengers because they do not want religious morality to gain ground. The Qur'an mentions how they try to influence public opinion and block the communication of this morality. For example, the ruling circle warns the people about Shu'ayb (as): **"... If you follow Shu'ayb, you will definitely be lost"** (Surat al-A'raf: 90). In another verse, Allah speaks of their anti-religion propaganda:

The ruling circle of his people-those who did not believe and who denied the encounter of the Hereafter and whom We had given opulence in this world-said: "This is nothing but a human being like yourselves who eats what you eat and drinks what you drink." (Surat al-Muminun: 33)

As we can see, these prominent individuals try to influence people's thinking by warning them that they will be losers and that Allah's messengers and prophets are just human beings, not supernatural beings. In another verse, Allah describes their attempts:

The ruling circle of those of his people who did not believe said: "This is nothing but a human being like yourselves who simply wants to gain ascendancy over you. If Allah had wanted, He would have sent angels down. We never heard of anything like this among our ancestors, the earlier peoples." (Surat al-Muminun: 24)

It is interesting that the ruling circle accuses His prophets and messengers of being opportunists. They accuse these worthy individuals of wanting money, possessions, power, and other transient worldly things. They made the same accusation against Musa (as) and Aaron (as):

“Have you come to us to turn us from what we found our fathers doing, and to gain greatness in the land?...” (Surah Yunus: 78)

Indeed, those engaged in this attempt are the very ones who accused the Prophet (saas), although many verses state that he wanted no return for his attempt to spread Islam (e.g., Surah Yunus: 72, Surat ash-Shu‘ara’: 179-180, and Surat al-An‘am: 90).

The ruling circle hurled insults, false accusations, threats, and extortion attempts at those who were trying to relay the religion. For example, the unbelievers roused the people against Lut (as) and his followers: **“...Expel them from your city! They are people who keep themselves pure!” (Surat al-A‘raf: 82).**

Similar threats were made against Shu‘ayb (as):

The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said: “We will drive you out of our city, Shu‘ayb, you and those who believe along with you, unless you return to our religion.” (Surat al-A‘raf: 88)

They said: “O Shu‘ayb, we do not understand much of what you say and we see you are weak among us. Were it not for your clan, we would have stoned you. We do not hold you in high esteem.” (Surah Hud: 91)

We can see from this verse that those who seek to spread Islam have to be very strong against the unbelievers. When the latter hear Allah’s name or religion mentioned, they are overcome by fits of anger. Ibrahim’s (as) father responded to his son’s call by stating: **“Do you forsake my deities, Ibrahim? If you do not stop, I will stone you. Keep away from me for a good long time” (Surah Maryam: 46).**

Pharaoh warned Musa (as) that if he accepted the existence of another deity besides him, he would be thrown into prison (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’: 29) and killed (Surah Ghafir: 26). He also threatened his magicians, saying that he would saw off their hands and feet and hang them on palm trees if they believed without his permission (Surah Ta Ha: 71). Due to their fierce anger, the unbelievers even tried to throw Ibrahim (as) into the fire (Surat al-‘Ankabut: 24). Nuh’s (as) unbelieving people threatened to stone him and drive him away (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’: 116).

By the will of Allah, this violent anger is a test for the believers, for:

When Our Signs are recited to them-Clear Signs-you can detect denial in the believers' faces. They all but assault those who recite Our Signs to them! Say: "Shall I inform you of something worse than that? The Fire, which Allah has promised those who do not believe. What an evil destination." (Surat al-Hajj: 72)

Those who do not believe all but strike you down with their evil looks when they hear the Reminder and say: "He is quite crazy." (Surat al-Qalam: 51)

The unbelievers also form themselves into a kind of movement. Perhaps they probably do this because they are not strong or courageous enough to confront believers on their own and therefore seek to increase their resolve. For example, when the magicians joined together against Musa (as), they said to one another: "... **so decide on your scheme and then arrive together in force ...**" (Surah Ta Ha: 64). Prominent individuals also met together to plan how to kill Musa (as).

3. Accusations against prophets and messengers

One strategy used by a society's ruling circle is to reduce the communication's effectiveness by leveling various accusations against these special men in an attempt to shake the people's faith and confidence in them. One such accusation is that of being crazy, which is mentioned in many verses of the Qur'an:

Those who do not believe all but strike you down with their evil looks when they hear the Reminder and say: "He is quite crazy." (Surat al-Qalam: 51)

They say: "You, to whom the Reminder has been sent down, are clearly crazy." (Surat al-Hijr: 6)

He is nothing but a man possessed. So wait a while and see what happens to him. (Surat al-Muminun: 25)

The ruling circle of those of his people who did not believe said: "We consider you a fool and think you are a liar." (Surat al-A'raf: 66)

The purpose here is to damage the messenger's reputation among the people and to justify punishing him. In their view, they must be only *crazy*, since they continue to embrace religious morality so tenaciously despite all pressures and difficulties. However, Allah says that His prophets and messengers are extremely intelligent and trustworthy:

... obeyed there, trustworthy. Your companion is not crazy. (Surat at-Takwir: 21-22)

Have they not reflected? Their companion is not crazy. He is only a clear warner. (Surat al-A'raf: 184)

They also accuse the Prophet (saas) of inventing the religion he proclaims:

Those who do not believe say: "This is nothing but a lie he has invented, and other people have helped him to do it. They have brought injustice and falsehood." (Surat al-Furqan: 4)

(The ruling circle of his people said:) "What is he but a man who has invented a lie against Allah? We do not believe in him." (Surat al-Muminun: 38)

But when Musa brought them Our Clear Signs, they said: "This is nothing but trumped-up magic. We never heard anything like this among our forefathers of old." (Surat al-Qasas: 36)

In response to this accusation, a prophet or messenger says:

Or do they say: "He has invented it"? Tell (them): "If I have invented it, the crime will be laid at my door. But I am innocent of the crimes that you commit." (Surah Hud: 35)

This specific accusation is based on another accusation:

You are nothing but a human being like ourselves. We think you are a liar. (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 186)

Then these accusations increase:

(They said:) "Has the Reminder been given to him of all of us? No indeed! He is an impudent liar." (Surat al-Qamar: 25)

This is one of the unbelievers' major questions: "Why him and no one else?" But even if it was someone else, they would still ask the same question, because they cannot endure the existence of a messenger or a prophet who relays Allah's religion. There is no such person in their "ancestral religion." And even if there were, he would be only a person of whom they could approve. **They ask: "Why was this Qur'an not sent down to one of the great men of the two cities?" (Surat az-Zukhruf: 31).** The ruling circles would

disparage any prophet or messenger who did not meet their expectations and who introduced a religion that did not agree with their ancestral religion:

The ruling circle of his people said: “We see [that] you [are] in flagrant error.” (Surat al-A’raf: 60)

They also accused Salih of being ill-starred: **“...We see you, and those with you, as an evil omen...”** (Surat an-Naml: 47) and Musa (as) of being weak: **(Pharaoh asked:) “Am I not better than this man, who is contemptible and can scarcely make anything clear?”** (Surat az-Zukhruf: 52).

There have certainly been many examples of such accusations but these are among the main ones. There will always be unbelievers who will raise these questions and react with absolute hatred and violence to anyone communicating Islam to others. As we saw earlier, Allah reveals how we are to respond to them.

4. The vigorous defense of ancestral religion and the attempt to bring the believers back to it

Similarly We never sent any warner before you to any city without the affluent among them saying: “We found our fathers following a religion, and we are simply following in their footsteps.” Ask: “What if I have come with better guidance than what you found your fathers following?” They reply: “We reject what you have been sent with.” (Surat az-Zukhruf: 23-24)

There are principles at the “cellular level” within human beings that prevent them from adopting new ideas and changing how they think. Present from birth in a person’s environment, family, and circle of friends, they form a “personal” viewpoint and an “individual” attitude toward life. We can call this a “worldview.”

So, one of the greatest challenges in communicating religion is to replace a non-Islamic worldview with one that is directed toward the Hereafter and founded upon fearing, respecting, and pleasing Allah. A person’s worldview may be completely materialist or give rise to religious ideas that have no relation to true religion. We see in the Qur’an that people’s reactions to prophets communicating religion and believers are of two kinds: either they deny Allah’s existence or they defend the traditional religion.

The unbelievers vigorously defend their ancestral religion and, as a result, reject His message and try to draw believers back to the old ways. Many people are strongly attached to their ancestral religion and judge what they hear according to whether or not it accords with their worldview.

When they are told: “Follow what Allah has sent down to you,” they reply: “We are following what we found our fathers doing.” What, even though their fathers did not understand a thing and were not guided! (Surat al-Baqara: 170)

When they are told: “Come to what Allah has sent down and to the Messenger,” they say: “What we found our fathers doing is enough for us.” What, even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided! (Surat al-Ma’ida: 104)

It is usual for some individuals to reject the true religion on the grounds that it does not accord with their ancestral religion, which is often very deeply rooted. Even though it contains an idea of Allah, it is very far from the truth revealed in the Qur’an. This is the work of satan, for the Qur’an warns: **“... Do not let the Deluder (satan) delude you concerning Allah”** (Surah Luqman: 33). This tactic tries to fool people into thinking that their actions, which are actually done under the influence of satan, are being done in the name of Allah and religion. Allah says in this regard:

If someone shuts his eyes to the remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign him a satan who becomes his bosom friend-they debar them from the path, yet they still think they are guided... (Surat az-Zukhruf: 36-37)

This is the situation with those who espouse their ancestral religion, and is no different from the situation of the members of the ruling circle. They use the idea of religion for their own advantage. In the Qur’an, Allah describes such hypocrites who use His word for their own benefit:

The ruling circle of those of his people who did not believe said: “This is nothing but a human being like yourselves who simply wants to gain ascendancy over you. If Allah had wanted, He would have sent angels down. We never heard of anything like this among our ancestors, the earlier peoples.” (Al-Muminun: 24)

There are several things to notice in this verse:

1. Some prominent members of society try to prevent people from believing in Islam by misusing Allah’s name. For example, they say: “If Allah had wanted, He would have sent angels down.” This is a sign that people expect to see miracles before they will believe. As we said earlier, belief does not require a special miracle; for those who use their intelligence, miracles happen every minute of the day.

Allah reveals that unbelievers use His name to keep people ignorant of the truths revealed in the Qur'an and to prevent them from following the right path:

Whenever they commit an indecent act, they say: "We found our fathers doing it, and Allah commanded us to do it too." Say: "Allah does not command indecency. Do you say things about Allah you do not know?" (Surat al-A'raf: 28)

As we can see, those who follow their ancestral religion seek to hide the unseemly things they do behind Allah's name in order to legitimate their deeds.

2. Some people try to influence and cloud the minds of anyone listening to a presentation of religion. These people are called *the ruling circle who did not believe*. They use their oppressive authority to confuse people and do what they can to keep them from believing. The reason for this is clear: believers, who are intelligent and aware, do not accept the falsehoods to which they are subjected and, most importantly, react against those who oppose religious morality and call upon them to justify their actions. It is natural that if such a spirit were established in society, the losers would be *the ruling circle who did not believe*.

Elsewhere we see that these people are part of satan's design, his squad that attacks believers with his promptings to help him attain his goal.

3. "The prominent individuals" who oppose what is said about religious morality accuse a prophet or a messenger of trying to gain prestige. This accusation has no relation to the truth and is discussed in the chapter entitled "Accusations against the Prophets and the Messengers."

4. One of the sayings of unbelieving ruling circle is: "We never heard of anything like this among our ancestors of old." However, the Qur'an shows just how attached they are to their ancestral religion and how unwise this attachment is: **"What, even though their fathers did not understand a thing and were not guided! (Surat al-Baqara: 170), "Even if satan is calling them to the punishment of the Blazing Fire?" (Surah Luqman: 21), or "What if I have come with better guidance than what you found your fathers following?" (Surat az-Zukhruf: 24).**

The interesting thing is that people who are attached to their ancestral religion want to convert believers who communicate the true religion.

The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said: "We will drive you out of our city, Shu'ayb, you and those who believe along with you, unless you return to our religion." He asked: "What, even though we detest it?" (Surat al-A'raf: 88)

This “conversion” is very important for those who are attached to their ancestral religion. They are very annoyed when one of their numbers accepts religious truth and so try to return that person to the fold. If this attempt is unsuccessful, they dismiss such people from their minds. (They are actually doing the new believers a favor.) Members of the ruling circle with power and authority go even farther by making threats.

Every ingrained belief that lies outside religion and every tradition that is contrary to the Qur’an fits into the category of “ancestral religion.” The followers of this religion could end up in Hell.

Then their destination will be the Blazing Fire. They found their fathers misguided, and they are following hard upon their heels. (Surat as-Saffat: 68-70)

ALLAH SAVES BELIEVERS FROM UNBELIEVERS' STRATAGEMS

Without exception, those who have reacted with hostility to the communication of religion have been unbelievers. They have always outnumbered the believers and incited other people against them. This is one of Allah's laws and, as the Qur'an tells us, Allah's laws cannot be altered. Thus, thinking on the Qur'anic verses, we can learn the stages of this ongoing struggle and how Allah ends it.

In earlier chapters, we saw the unbelievers' violent reactions against the believers who sought to communicate religion and learned that the basic reason for this was their close relationship with satan. We saw that ruling circles have made many threats, often consisting of intimidation and attempted murder, against believers. Now we will see how believers bring their attempts to communicate religion to an end.

When believers realize that the person or society they are calling to Islam will not become Muslim, they stop their efforts. In such a situation, the only thing that can be done is to end their relationship with that society. At that point, Allah, in His mercy, will separate the believers from the unbelievers and give the latter what they deserve: a great misery that will destroy them.

When Our messengers [the angels] came with the good news to Ibrahim, they said: "We are going to destroy the people of this city. Truly its inhabitants are wrongdoers." He (Ibrahim) said: "Lut is in it." They (the messengers) said: "We know very well who is in it. We are going to rescue him and his family-except for his wife. She will be one of those who stay behind." When Our messengers came to Lut, he was distressed on their account, feeling incapable of protecting them. They said: "Do not fear and do not grieve. We are going to rescue you and your family-except for your wife; she will be one of those who stay behind." (Surat al-'Ankabut: 31-33)

Then when Our command came, We rescued Salih and those who believed along with him by a mercy from Us from the disgrace of that day. Your Lord is the All-Strong, the Almighty. (Surah Hud: 66)

But they denied him (Nuh), so We rescued him and those with him in the Ark. And We drowned the people who denied Our Signs. They were a blind people. (Surat al-A'raf: 64)

After the rescue, all the tyrants were led to destruction:

Has the news of those who came before them not reached them, the people of Nuh, 'Ad, and Thamud; and the people of Ibrahim and the inhabitants of Madyan and the overturned cities? Their Messengers brought them the Clear Signs. Allah did not wrong them; rather, they wronged themselves. (Surat at-Tawba: 70)

These instances of destruction have come to light in modern archaeological investigations. In this way, information given in the Qur'an has been corroborated by external evidence. Thus, it is seen once again that the verses have a deterrent nature. Now we will see how unbelieving societies came to destruction.

The destroyed people of Lut

The people of Lut (as), who called him a liar, were the first people to practice homosexuality. Allah describes how He sent down a plague and put out their eyes, how a great blast seized their city, how He turned their cities upside down, and how stones of hard-baked clay rained down upon them.

The destruction of Pharaoh

The punishment inflicted on Pharaoh and his supporters is described in the following terms: they were pursued with a curse in this world and they will appear as hideous and spurned people on the Day of Resurrection. Allah describes how He has expelled them from springs and gardens, from treasures and a splendid situation. He goes on to say that their army was drowned and that years of drought and scarcity were sent so that Pharaoh and his people would come to their senses and listen. He describes how He sent them plagues of floods, locusts, lice, frogs, and blood as well as signs, but that they were arrogant and doers of evil.

He says that He utterly destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had made and the buildings they had constructed, and inflicted the harshest punishment upon them.

The torment of the people of Thamud

The punishment inflicted on the people of Thamud, who did not believe Prophet Salih (as), consisted of mass destruction: their wrecked, abandoned, and ruined dwellings were left standing as a deterrent to others, they spent the night on their knees because of the terrible noise, they were caught up in earthquakes, they resembled dry grass being scythed down, and they were struck by lightning as they looked on.

The flood that engulfed Nuh's (as) people

Nuh's (as) unbelieving people, who oppressed those with him, were drowned in a terrible flood. As Allah said previously, they were seized hold of inexorably by the "great blast" and turned into dirty scum.

The torment of the people of 'Ad

The terrible torments inflicted on the people of 'Ad ended in their total destruction and eradication.

An unbearable noise strikes the people of Madyan

The punishment inflicted on the people of Madyan, who were hostile toward Prophet Shu'ayb (as), caused them to be seized by a terrible noise. In addition, the oppressors spent the night on their knees in their own homes, as if they had never known any comfort. Pitiless tremors assailed them, and they were found flattened in their own homes.

All of these events happened to those unbelieving societies that rejected Allah and religion. Remains of several destroyed civilizations have been preserved until today to serve as warnings:

Whole societies have passed away before your time, so travel throughout the land and see the final fate of the unbelievers. (Surah Al 'Imran: 137)

Those who ignore religious morality or who are lax in this regard should be afraid of experiencing the same things that befell the people of 'Ad or Madyan.

THE PROPHETS' AND MESSENGERS' STRONG FAITH IN ALLAH

There are many indications as to whether the believers' faith is strong or not. Perhaps the most important one is their attitude in times of prosperity and difficulty. Those who have strong faith know that Allah is in control of everything and so trust Him completely, no matter what happens. When confronted with difficulty or prosperity, they will do nothing that violates the Qur'an's moral teachings. Due to the strong attachment they have forged with Allah, they will know that He is with them at all times, that He knows everything they do, and supports them. The Qur'an is full of such accounts.

Now we will see the warm bond that exists between Allah, the prophets and the messengers, and the believers who follow in their path.

Trust in Allah in times of difficulty

(Believers are) those to whom people said: "The people have gathered against you, so fear them." But that merely increased their faith, and they replied: "Allah is enough for us and is the Best of Guardians." (Surah Al 'Imran: 173)

Among believers, those with the strongest attachment to Allah are the prophets and the messengers. This is shown in the trust they display in times of difficulty. For example, Prophet Musa's (as) reaction when Pharaoh and his army were caught in the middle of the sea was: **And when the two hosts came into sight of one another, Musa's companions exclaimed: "We will surely be overtaken!"** (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 61). When those with him feared that they were going to be overtaken, Musa (as) reassured them: **"Never! My Lord is with me and will guide me" (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 62).** So, as a reward for his trust in Allah, Musa (as) and those with him were rescued from the sea by a miracle. Another good example is the exemplary life of our Prophet (saas):

If you do not help him, Allah helped him when those who did not believe drove him out and there were two of them in the cave. He said to his companion [Abu Bakr]: "Do not be despondent, Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down His serenity upon him and reinforced him with troops you could not see. He made the word of those who did not believe undermost. It is the word of Allah that is uppermost. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (Surat at-Tawba: 40)

When the Prophet (saas) showed his trust in Allah, he experienced a sense of contentment and security and was assisted by invisible armies. The prophets and messengers said that they trusted only in Allah, sought refuge only in Him, and that He shows them the true path. Allah reveals in the Qur'an: **"So put your trust in Allah. You are clearly on a path of truth"** (Surat an-Naml: 79) and invites the prophets and messengers to trust in Him. Elsewhere, He tells our Prophet (saas) to say: **"Nothing can happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is Our Master. It is in Allah that the believers should put their trust"** (Surat at-Tawba: 51). Such a degree of trust comes only from a sincere faith in Allah.

We see another example in Surah Yusuf 23, when the governor's wife, tried to seduce Yusuf (as). He took refuge in Allah and, despite the threat of being humiliated and thrown into prison, did not succumb to her demand. His response to her demonstrates his close attachment to Allah:

He said: "O my Lord, prison is preferable to me than what they call upon me to do. Unless You turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance." (Surah Yusuf: 33)

An important characteristic of prophets and messengers is the example they leave to those around them. When necessary, they are determined, unmovable and uncompromising; however, they are also full of love and compassion. Moreover, people living around them are influenced by their attitudes and behavior. For example, Musa (as) was strong and decisive when dealing with Pharaoh, but gentle with the magicians. Thus, after they embraced Islam and Pharaoh threatened them with torture and death, they could say to him: **"We do not care! We are returning to our Lord"** (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 50).

And Ayyub (as), when afflicted by a terrible illness, prayed sincerely and, in return, Allah showed him how to heal himself:

Remember Our servant Ayyub when he called out his Lord: "Satan has afflicted me with exhaustion and suffering." (His Lord replied:) "Stamp your foot! Here is a cool bath and water to drink." (Surah Sad: 41-42)

Every time the unbelievers called them liars or threatened them with death and exile, the prophets and messengers asked Allah for help. Of course, this close bond is not restricted only to *times of hardship*. They are a good example to believers, because they have a close relationship to Allah every moment of their lives. For example, while stroking the dark horses given to him, Prophet Sulayman (as) said: **"Truly do I love the love of good, with a**

view to the glory of my Lord ...” (Surah Sad: 32). For unbelievers, *enjoying the life of this world* increases their greed; but possessions only deepened Sulayman’s (as) attachment to Allah. His prayer is an example of sincerity to all believers:

“O my Lord, keep me thankful for the blessing You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents. Keep me acting rightly, pleasing You, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your servants who are righteous.” (Surat an-Naml: 19)

These and similar examples from the Qur’an show that the prophets and the messengers maintained their close relationship with Allah at all times. This relationship was open and affected everyone around them.

The spiritual state of Allah's sincere servants

The prophets and messengers, as well as their followers, always have an eager, excited, and joyful spirit because they turn to Allah and submit to Him sincerely. This profound spiritual state knows human helplessness, directs itself to the Hereafter, and causes its possessor to know that Allah controls everything.

(Ibrahim said:) "They are all my enemies-except for the Lord of all the worlds. He Who created me and guides me, Who gives me food and drink, and Who heals me when I am ill, Who will cause my death and then give me life; and Who I sincerely hope will forgive my mistakes on the Day of Reckoning." (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 77-82)

Musa (as) knew his own helplessness in relation to Allah: **"My Lord, I am truly in need of any good You have in store for me" (Surat al-Qasas: 24).**

And when Yusuf (as) met his parents, who were sincere believers, he embraced them and set them on his throne. The strong love he felt for believers, especially for the family that had brought him up, is a manifestation of his closeness to Allah.

Since believers turn to Allah in everything and try their best to be sincere servants, **"...they are those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and Earth..." (Surah Al 'Imran: 191).**

To understand their sincerity better, we can contrast them to their opposites. The believers are just as sincere as the hypocrites are insincere. For example, to avoid confrontation the hypocrites offer such false excuses as: "Our houses are exposed," "Do not go out to fight in the heat," and "Had we been able to, we would have gone out with you," while the believers are eager to confront the unbelievers.

Nor is anything held against those who, when they came to you for you to provide them with mounts and you said: "I cannot find anything on which to mount you," turned away with their eyes overflowing with tears, overcome by grief at having nothing to give. (Surat at-Tawba: 92)

Their sincerity and strong faith in Allah causes these believers, when they recite or hear the Qur'an, to **"fall on their faces in prostration" (Surat al-Isra': 107)**. Allah calls them *people of knowledge* and, in another verse, says:

Weeping, they fall to the ground in prostration, and it increases them in humility. (Surat al-Isra': 109)

When they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they recognize of the truth. They say: "Our Lord, we believe, so write us down among the witnesses." (Surat al-Ma'ida: 83)

The sincere prayers of the prophets and the messengers

Faithful Muslims, those who follow their ancestral religion, associaters, and many others pray to Allah for all sorts of reasons. Unbelievers generally pray in difficult or anxious times for more money or possessions to get them through this life. Allah gives an example of such people:

When harm touches him, he calls on Us, lying on his side, sitting down, or standing up. Then when We remove the harm from him, he carries on as if he had never called on Us when the harm first touched him. In that way, We make what they have done appear good to the profligate. (Surah Yunus: 12)

And about those who pray only about this life, Allah says:

If anyone desires to cultivate the Hereafter, We will increase him in his cultivation. If anyone desires to cultivate this world, We will give him some of it but he will have no share in the Hereafter. (Surat ash-Shura: 20)

...There are some people who say: "Our Lord, give us good in this world." They will have no share in the Hereafter. (Surat al-Baqara: 200)

However, the prayers of the prophets, messengers, and believers are always directed toward the Hereafter. Sincere and aware of their helplessness, they give no consideration to themselves. Believers pray that Allah will not disgrace them on the Day of Judgment, inspire them to do only those things that will be to their credit on that Day, and to do good works that will save them from the pangs of Hell. They desire only the forgiveness of their sins and errors, the acceptance of their repentance, forbearance, and mercy.

When Adam (as) realized his error, he prayed: **"O our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost"** (Surat al-A'raf: 23). Nuh (as) asked forgiveness for his unbelieving son and immediately prayed when Allah showed his error:

"O my Lord, I seek refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost." (Surah Hud: 47)

There is another good example from those who have a deep understanding of religion:

All they said was: “O our Lord, forgive us our wrong actions and any excesses we went to in what we did, make our feet firm, and help us against these unbelieving people.” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 147)

The sincerity and close friendship with Allah of the prophets and the messengers can be felt in their prayers. For example, they pray not to be disgraced on the Day of Judgment, to be spared the pangs of Hell, to inherit the blessings of Paradise, and that Allah will forgive all believers on the Day of Judgment. Of course, they also pray for a good life in this world, that the unbelievers will know the pangs of Hell, and to have nothing to do with the unbelievers. Ibrahim (as) asked for a good life in this world:

And when Ibrahim said: “O my Lord, make this a place of safety and provide its inhabitants with fruits-all of them who believe in Allah and the Last Day,” He replied: “I will let anyone who becomes an unbeliever enjoy himself a little, but then I will drive him to the punishment of the Fire. What an evil destination!” (Surat al-Baqara: 126)

As we said earlier, unbelievers also pray to Allah and, if He so desires, He grants their prayers. But their prayers are directed only toward this world; thus, He grants them so that they will experience misery here and increase their unbelief until they die. However, the believers’ prayers for this world are actually directed to the Hereafter. In the verse above, we see that Ibrahim (as) prayed for a safe place for believers in the city so they could settle down and continue to preach Islam. Due to their belief in Allah and the Hereafter, they were able to receive His blessings.

While preaching to his people, Nuh (as) told them of what they will gain by asking Allah for forgiveness:

(Nuh said: “O my Lord.) I said: ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly, He is Endlessly Forgiving.’” He will send heaven down on you in abundant rain and reinforce you with more wealth and sons, and grant you gardens and waterways. (Surah Nuh: 10-12)

There is no doubt that Nuh (as) recited this list of blessings to encourage his people to action and increase their closeness to Allah.

Praising Allah’s glory

And say: “Praise be to Allah, Who has had no son and no partner in His Kingdom, and Who needs no one to protect Him from

abasement.” And proclaim His Greatness repeatedly! (Surat al-Isra’: 111)

As a natural result of their strong bond with Allah, believers remember and praise Him. Aware that Allah’s power encompasses all things, they honor, fear, and respect that power due to their wonder in the face of His splendor and majesty. Believers are aware of their helplessness in comparison to Allah’s power, and so *declare the glory of the Lord at every opportunity*.

Thinking always of Allah and remembering Him separates the believers from the unbelievers. This is the result of their strong bond with Him. One of the things they say while thinking about Him is:

(People with intelligence are) those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and Earth: “O our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 191)

Clearly, the only people who can truly use their minds are believers, for the way they think enables them to sense Allah’s power and greatness. Thus, they praise His glory and worship Him.

(Ibrahim said:) “O our Lord, do not make us a target for the unbelievers and forgive us. O our Lord, You are the Almighty, the All-Wise.” (Surat al-Mumtahana: 5)

In the same way, when Musa (as) saw Allah’s glory, he said **“... Glory be to You!”** (Surat al-A’raf: 143). And when Ibrahim (as) was preaching, he said: **“... My Lord encompasses all things in His knowledge...”** (Surat al-An’am: 80). Their first and natural inclination was to exalt Allah’s glory. This is also true of Shu’ayb (as):

We would be inventing lies against Allah if we returned to your religion after Allah has saved us from it. We could never return to it, unless Allah our Lord so willed. Our Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. We have put our trust in Allah. Our Lord, judge between us and our people with truth. You are the best of judges. (Surat al-A’raf: 89)

Allah declared that prophets and believers have a strong bond with Him because they remember Him and praise His glory. In addition to the examples given above, many other verses proclaim this same truth:

“... Glory be to You, it is not for me to say what I have no right to say! If I had said it, then You would have known it. You know what is in my self, but I do not know what is in Your Self. You are the Knower of all unseen things.” (Surat al-Ma’ida: 116)

He (Nuh) said: “My Lord, I seek refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost.” (Surah Hud: 47)

(Yusuf said:) “My Lord, You have granted power to me in the land and taught me the true meaning of events. Originator of the heavens and Earth, You are my Friend in this world and the next. So take me as

**a Muslim at my death and join me to the people who are righteous.”
(Surah Yusuf: 101)**

He (Sulayman) said: “My Lord, forgive me and give me a kingdom the like of which will never be granted to anyone after me. Truly, You are the Ever-Giving.” (Surah Sad: 35)

Due to this sincerity, Allah is pleased with believers and they will be pleased with Him. As a reward for their good works and patience, they will be saved from disgrace on the Day of Judgment and will receive their inheritance in Paradise. They will not be afflicted by anxiety or heaviness, will receive their heart's desire, and will live forever amid unfading beauty. This is the happy ending and eternal salvation awaiting all believers.

ARGUMENT IN THE QUR'AN

Humanity was created to serve and worship Allah, win His favor, receive His mercy, and attain Paradise. Believers direct their actions toward these goals by basing their life on the Qur'an's moral teachings.

People experience many hardships while alive. To overcome them, they must act according to Qur'an's moral teachings, for doing so will enable them to escape the traps set by satan, their main antagonist. His first strategy is to make believers forget about religion and prevent them from following the true path.

One of satan's strategies is to incite arguments among people to divert them from the true path. Although "argument" has several connotations in the Qur'an, there is a basic common meaning: to be superficial, lacking spiritual insight, and engaging in pointless deeds. To argue means to speak when silence would be better, to prolong a discussion by creating a charged atmosphere, and to ignore what is good. Those who argue seek to undermine the truth of Islam, which Allah sent down with many proofs, as well as of the Qur'an and holy, religious concepts by attempting to prove their opposites.

Among people there is one who argues about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious satan. (Surat al-Hajj: 3)

Finally, an argument is a violent and unhappy exchange between a person who has fallen into difficulty and those who put him in that situation. This is the style of communication taking place between the damned, as is revealed in the Qur'an.

Arguing does not befit believers, and their respect and love for another precludes it. They do not argue with unbelievers, but speak with them only to communicate religion and while doing this they employ the most efficient and beautiful style.

FIRST ARGUMENT

Satan was the first entity to argue. This is related in the Qur'an as follows:

When your Lord said to the angels: "I am putting an overlord on Earth," they said: "Why put on it one who will cause corruption on it and shed blood when we glorify You with praise and proclaim Your purity?" He said: "I know what you do not know." He taught Adam the names of all things. Then He arrayed them before the angels and said: "Tell me the names of these, if you are telling the truth." They said: "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." He said: "Adam, tell them their names." When he had told them their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the Unseen of the heavens and Earth, and I know what you make known and what you hide?" (Surat al-Baqara: 30-33)

In these verses, we see that the angels were not happy with Allah's decision to create Adam (as). This was a great error because, sharing very little of Allah's eternal knowledge, they could not understand why He would do this. Instead they were only required to obey Allah's command. But they wanted to know why Adam (as) had been created, and so Allah explained it to them. After that, all of the angels sought Allah's mercy, repented, and obeyed Allah's command - all except for satan, who resisted and started an argument with Allah (Allah is surely beyond that). At the conclusion of the above verses, Allah says:

We said to the angels: "Prostrate to Adam!" and they prostrated, with the exception of Diabolis. He refused. He was arrogant and was one of the unbelievers. (Surat al-Baqara: 34)

Although Allah explained to him why He created Adam (as), satan refused *to prostrate before Adam*. Elsewhere in the Qur'an, satan's "way of thinking" after his disobedience is described:

We created you, formed you, and then said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam." And they prostrated, except for Diabolis. He was not among those who prostrated. He (Allah) said: "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you to?" He (Diabolis) replied: "I am better than him. You created me from fire, and You created him from clay." (Surat al-A'raf: 11-12)

We can see that satan's presumption to argue with Allah made him arrogant. He thought he was superior to Adam (as) and that it would be humiliating for him to prostrate before him. His pride could not let him do it, and he argued with Allah. So, his arrogance was the point from which the first-ever argument began.

This shows the difference between satan and the other angels; the angels first made the mistake by being unhappy with Allah's action. But they had to know that whatever He wills has an eternal purpose and that they must obey Him without resentment. In spite of their error, Allah did not punish them and even told them why He was doing this. After that, they repented, took refuge in Allah, and obeyed His command.

But satan, unlike the other angels, was arrogant. Considering himself superior to Adam (as), he resented the fact that Adam (as) should be held in higher esteem than he. Thus, he did not obey Allah even after Allah explained why He willed Adam's (as) creation. In other words, to see the truth, to understand it in one's heart and yet refuse to admit it is the result of pride. Satan did not want to find the truth and act in accordance with it; rather, he wanted to satisfy his own selfish desires.

In order to supply a "logical" foundation for his attitude, he proclaimed that he was created from fire. However, this was of no use because Allah created everything and can exalt anyone He wills at any time. And satan knew this. But because he was seeking his own satisfaction, he pretended not to know the truth and invented his own distorted clay-fire explanation. Then, persisting in this mistake, he started to argue. And so Allah cursed him:

He (Allah) said: "Descend from Heaven. It is not for you to be arrogant in it. So get out! You are one of the abased." He (satan) said: "Grant me a reprieve until the day they are raised up." He (Allah) said: "You are one of the reprieved." He (satan) said: "By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful." He (Allah) said: "Get out of it, reviled and driven out. As for those of them who follow you, I will fill up Hell with every one of you." (Surat al-A'raf: 13-18)

When We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves to Adam!" they prostrated, except for Diabolis. He said: "What! Am I to prostrate to one You have created out of clay? Do You see this creature You have honored over me? If You reprieve me until the Day of Resurrection, I will be the master of his descendants, except for a very few." He (Allah) said: "Go! And as for any who follow you, your repayment is Hell, repayment in full! Stir up any of them you can with

your voice, rally against them your cavalry and your infantry, share with them in their children and their wealth, and make them promises!" The promise of satan is nothing but delusion. But as for "My servants, you will not have any authority over them." Your Lord suffices as a guardian. (Surat al-Isra': 61-65)

The first argument ended with Allah's cursing of satan and driving him away. Allah allotted him a certain period of time in which he could tempt humanity to follow his own perverse path. So, how does satan lead people astray? He does it in many ways, is related in verse 17 of Surat al-A'raf, **"he will come at them, from in front and behind, from their right and their left."**

One the major ways in which satan leads people astray is to transfuse his own characteristics into them: arrogance, rebelliousness, ungratefulness, and similar traits.

And they are just as argumentative as satan is. Satan, who knows the truth but does not accept it, argues to show that something that appeals to his selfish desire is actually the truth. In the same way, his followers argue to satisfy their own arrogance. Arguing becomes a part of their lives. Instead of *exchanging ideas to find the truth*, their dialogue with each other is a stubborn (if not erroneous) insistence on their own personal viewpoint, which they will defend come what may.

Religion cannot be reconciled with selfish desires and worldly ambition. For this reason, those who argue use it when someone tries to tell them about religious morality. They accept religion in their conscience, but their worldly desires lead them to deny it. They choose satan's way of arguing to find a supposed "logical" basis for their ideas.

Satan does all he can to fan the sparks of argument in order to divert people from Allah's true path and lead them astray. He makes every effort to fill people's minds with useless, meaningless matters so they will not think about Allah or the Hereafter. In essence, he convinces them that arguing is fun.

For this reason, Allah warns believers about satan's habit of fanning the sparks of argument: **"Say to My servants that they should only say the best. Satan wants to stir up trouble between them. Satan is an outright enemy to humanity"** (Surat al-Isra': 53). Believers accept this warning and do not argue with each other, thus protecting themselves from this satanic habit.

Believers consider arguing to be a tedious activity; unbelievers are seduced by satan's making their actions seem good: **"Satan has made their actions seem good to them and debarred them from the Way, so they are not guided (Surat an-Naml: 24).**

He makes them want to argue constantly, for this gives them great pleasure. In fact, they regard it as normal and right.

We can see this every day among people. The basic similarity between all of these arguments, regardless of when or where they occur, is that they end with no concrete result. Someone who has only a little knowledge and has not read a single book about Allah presumes to argue about Him. Others deliberately engage in argument to keep others from following the true path. Now we will look at such arguments in the Qur'an and examine the characters of those who engage in it.

ARGUMENTS BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

The Lord tells us about the unbelievers' arguments in the Qur'an as follows:

Say: "Do you argue with us about Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? We have our actions, and you have your actions. We act for Him alone." (Surat al-Baqara: 139)

Satan's argumentative character is reflected in unbelievers, for they argue with believers about Allah as well as the Qur'an and Islam. Allah reveals how such people regard believers:

When they are told: "Believe in the way that the people believe," they say: "What! Are we to believe in the way that fools believe?" No indeed! They are the fools, but they do not know it. When they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe." But then when they go apart with their satans, they say: "We are really with you. We were only mocking." But Allah is mocking them and drawing them on as they wander blindly in their excessive insolence. (Surat al-Baqara: 13-15)

We see in these verses that those who argue with and ridicule the believers may have a spiritual relationship with satan. They may *go apart with their satans* and may be his intimate followers. Those who argue with each other frequently lie and distort the facts, or else say something "off the top of their head" and then go on to argue it away. Arguing does not stay on any real topic and has no meaningful purpose. Everyone tries to impose their own view on others with clichés and stereotypical ideas.

Shall I tell you upon whom the satans descend? They descend on every evil liar. They give them a hearing, and most of them are liars. (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 221-223)

Unbelievers sometimes launch a propaganda campaign to point believers and those with religious tendencies toward an alternative to true religion. Seeking thereby to destroy the credibility of true religion, they incite arguments about it because they *desire to extinguish Allah's Light with their mouths* (Surat as-Saff: 8). Arguments are incited in all possible open media venues to target religion, and anti-religious articles, writings and pictures denying the truth of creation are regularly placed in some newspapers and

magazines to *extinguish Allah's light*. They deliberately attempt to disparage Islam and the Qur'an, shake people's belief in religion, and deter them from religious morality. No doubt, these activities are designed to prevent the spread of religion, to put pressure on those who communicate it, and to stop the spread of religious morality. However, in the same verse Allah says that **"He will perfect His Light, though the unbelievers hate it."**

Arguments between believers and unbelievers normally break out after a believer tries to introduce religion. Either because they see that the believer presents an undistorted and superior religion, or because they arrogantly reject religious morality even though they are equipped by nature and conscience to accept it, unbelievers are drawn into loud arguments instead of engaging in a civilized and useful exchange of ideas. Generally, their examples are untenable and are brought forward just for the sake of argument.

When an example is made of the son of Maryam, your people laugh uproariously. They retort: "Who is better then, our deities or him?" They only say this to you for argument's sake. They are indeed a disputatious people. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 57-58)

When encountering such people, Allah's advice is to walk away before they can say another word:

It has been sent down to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's Signs being rejected and mocked at by people, you must not sit with them until they start talking of other things. If you do, you are just the same as them. Allah will gather all the hypocrites and unbelievers into Hell. (Surat an-Nisa': 140)

We can see that such people really know nothing about religious morality. In fact, they say: **"Follow our way, and we will bear the weight of your mistakes"** (Surat al-'Ankabut: 12), even though Allah says: **"...No burden-bearer can bear another's burden"** (Surat al-Isra': 15).

Unbelievers try to win an argument by bringing their power or material wealth to bear, or on the basis that most people think like they think. However, Allah says: **"If you obeyed most of those on Earth, they would misguide you from Allah's Way. They follow nothing but conjecture. They are only guessing"** (Surat al-An'am: 116).

In other words, just because most people believe something does not mean that it is true. In this regard, Allah frequently mentions such stubborn and ungrateful people, those who do not thank Him, do not use their minds, and hate the truth. This shows that most people are rebellious and, therefore, the number of those who follow a fallacious idea is not important. But

unbelievers think that an idea's truth and power has something to do with how many people believe it. We often hear this fallacy expressed as: "Most people don't know, but you know!"

In arguments about religion, unbelievers argue to find a "logical" basis for their unbelief. And, just as satan said: **"You created me from fire and him from earth,"** they say something from their distorted logic and argue on the basis of it. Their purpose is to find an excuse to deny what they know to be true but cannot accept. The Qur'an tells us that they have copied this method from satan:

... Though they see every Sign, they still have no faith, so that when they come to you, disputing with you, those who do not believe say: "This is nothing but the myths of previous peoples!" They keep others from it and avoid it themselves. They are only destroying themselves, but they are not aware of it. (Surat al-An'am: 25-26)

It is easy to recognize the unbelievers by the kinds of examples they use. In the Qur'an, we see that they claimed to have never heard of Islam as the Prophet (saas) explained, that they had never heard about it from their elders, and that they believed in Allah. Most unbelievers are very violent and aggressive in their arguments, for they threaten **"to drive believers from their land unless they return to their religion"** (Surah Ibrahim: 13), **"to stone them"** (Surah Maryam: 46), **"to murder and torture them"** (Surah Ta Ha: 71), **"to throw them into prison"** (Surat ash-Shu'ara': 29), or **"to burn them"** (Surat as-Saffat: 97). These examples can be multiplied.

So far, we have examined their arguments about Allah, how they regard believers, how they distort the truth, and how they try to extinguish Allah's light. Furthermore, we have outlined the various pretexts for their arguments that the Qur'an is untrue. We now turn to another type of argument:

What about the one who argued with Ibrahim about his Lord, on the basis that Allah had given him sovereignty? Ibrahim said: "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die." He (Pharaoh) said: "I also give life and cause to die." Ibrahim said: "Allah makes the sun come from the East. Make it come from the West." And the unbeliever was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide a wrongdoing people. (Surat al-Baqara: 258)

The person presented here as arguing with Ibrahim (as), is a wicked person who has been spoiled by prosperity. Elsewhere in the Qur'an, it is stated that those who argue and contend with believers are wealthy, prominent individuals. Of course, the members of this ruling circle fear that their established order will be destroyed and that their freedom to flout justice and

right will be curtailed. Thus, it is natural for them to oppose any change. The wealth that Allah gave them from His abundance made them perverse and led them to associate Allah with His creatures.

No matter how much they claim to believe in Allah, they are in truth faithless people who desire only the wealth of this world. Allah may give them what they desire here, but their situation will be quite different in the Hereafter, because they did not practice religion, ignored the calls, and thus persisted in their unbelief. Thus they should fear their reward: the eternal pangs of Hell. Believers also desire wealth and riches from Allah: **“Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire”** (Surat al-Baqara: 201).

But believers do not desire wealth only to satisfy their lower selves or to live a life of decadent luxury. Like Sulayman (as), they desire riches so that they may be close to Allah and communicate His religion effectively. Sulayman (as) said: **“Truly do I love the love of good, with a view to the glory of my Lord...”** (Surah Sad: 32). In return for his sincerity, Allah made him the ruler of the land.

In the past paragraph, we mentioned the unbeliever who argued with Ibrahim (as). He was unaware of his fate and did not understand that Allah encompasses all things and that no one can do anything except by His will. He presumed to tell Ibrahim (as): “I also give life and cause to die.” Of course, it is satan who opens the way to such arrogance: **“I (satan) will make things on Earth seem good to them and I will mislead them all, every one of them”** (Surat al-Hijr: 39). In this way, he rebelled against Allah and His Messenger. The door of worldly desires and possessions was opened to him, and he was attracted by their appeal. But Ibrahim (as) wisely said: **“Allah makes the sun come from the East. Make it come from the West,”** and the unbeliever “was dumbfounded.”

Allah will help every sincere believer who turns to Him. The Qur’an tells us how believers are supported in their conversations with unbelievers: **“They bring you no similitude, but We bring you the truth and the best of explanations (as against it)”** (Surat al-Furqan: 33). So, by Allah’s will, believers are always victorious in such encounters.

The Qur’an tells us that the society’s ruling circle, which has lapsed into unbelief, always create the occasion for an argument. These prominent people are all wealthy, from the viewpoint of worldly possessions, and have a high political and/or economic profile. Their activities will be explained below.

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter think that the wealth they have acquired will be theirs forever. They may fall into a careless state in which they deny the coming of the Day of Judgment and claim that, like the rich vineyard owner in the Qur’an, their situation will be even better in the Hereafter. On the one hand they say they are Allah’s devoted servants; on the other hand they are afraid of death and “would love to be allowed to live a

thousand years”: **“... life seemed long and good to them...”** (Surat al-Anbiya’: 44). And the intimations of satan are at the root of this desire for immortality.

As we read in Surat al-A’raf 20, satan tried to deceive Adam (as) with the promise of eternal life. His additional promise concerning the **“tree of Everlasting Life and a kingdom that will never fade away”** (Surah Ta Ha: 120) is consistent with everything we have said so far. One of satan’s most lethal traps is the promise of eternal life and wealth; this is the main thing that leads his “squadron” to perdition. The human spirit is immortal anyway; it is the body that is mortal. The spirit came into being when eternal life was created. Whether a spirit will go to Paradise or Hell is determined by the good works done in this transient world. We cannot expect that a person whose mind has been clouded by satan’s deceitful promises will be able to discuss matters in a logically consistent way. Rather, they will engage in endless argument, shouting and bawling to intimidate the person with whom they are speaking.

When confronted by such people, believers should realize that any further discussion at that point in time is useless and thus leave the person alone. In fact, this follows the Qur’anic command to avoid arguments:

Say: “Do you argue with us about Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? We have our actions and you have your actions. We act for Him alone.” (Surat al Baqara: 139)

THE UNBELIEVERS' ARGUMENTS AMONG THEMSELVES

Those unbelievers whose “hearts are scattered wide” always argue with themselves just as they argue with the believers, because human beings are **“argumentative more than anything else”** (Surat al-Kahf: 54). Satan enters the picture at every point, convincing them that arguing is natural and that a quarrel between two people who love each other is the “spice of life.” This shows just how widespread his influence is. The media is especially eager to take up this topic to legitimate arguing. The suggestion is that people are not sincere, but opportunistic, in their relationships with each other.

Instead of solving a matter, people say that “the less you touch on provocative issues, the happier you will be.” But in spite of all this distortion, it is possible to draw a truth out of these ideas: those led astray by satan will never stop arguing. They will argue until the Day of Judgment and then even afterwards in Hell; they will argue among themselves in the Hereafter just as they did in this world:

One “great blast” will seize them while they are quibbling (Surah Ya Sin: 49) and they will accuse each other of being greedy and misleading (Surat as-Saffat: 27-33). In Hell they will argue with Allah (Surat al-A'raf: 38-41, Surat Fussilat: 29, Surat Qaf: 27-30, and Surat al-Mu'minun: 106-108), with the custodians of Hell (Surat az-Zukhruf: 77-80 and Surat al-Mulk: 8-11), with the believers in Heaven (Surat al-Hadid: 13-15), and among themselves (Surah Ghafir: 46-50, Surah Saba': 31-33, and Surah Sad: 59-64). All of this will be to humiliate them and turn their broken hopes into misery.

The keepers of Hell will not listen to them, saying that they should address their pleas to Allah. But Allah will forbid them to speak to Him, saying that all of the blessings of Paradise are forbidden to them. Those who led them astray and the idols they worshipped will not know them; in fact, they will deny that they led the unbelievers astray. Satan will say that he only called them and they came running. In other words, he did not force them to accept his “truth.” As a result, they will experience eternal misery. (Allah knows the truth.)

THE ATTEMPT TO INCITE ARGUMENT AMONG BELIEVERS

Believers take pleasure in conversation because Allah created it in their nature. While talking among themselves, they always mention Allah, exalt His glory, and seek ways to draw closer to Him. So, any argument goes against religion and their own nature. Those who have “**become brothers by Allah’s blessing**” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 103) talk with one another in this way. If a difference of opinion arises, they *consult* with each other to reach the best solution. Believers do not try to assert their own egos over other believers. Nor are they arrogant, for they do not blindly insist on a particular idea just because it is their own. In a society made up of such people, argument can find no place to break out.

Therefore, an occasion for argument can only come from outside. There are two possible outside sources here. First, one or several believers may grow careless and distance themselves from the Qur’an’s morality, even if only for a little while. In this case, former non-Islamic traits begin to reemerge and, by Satan’s wiles, an occasion for argument may appear. But believers who make such an error soon realize, either through the intervention of other believers or through their own consciences, that their behavior was contrary to the Qur’an. They ask Allah’s forgiveness and, obeying “**put things right between you**” (Surat al-Anfal: 1), make up for any hard feelings they caused.

The second possibility is quite different: argument enters “from outside” in an organized and aware fashion. Unbelieving hypocrites insinuate themselves into a community of believers for a short-term gain. Their prime ammunition to incite argument is the idea of obedience, for they find it irritating to have to accept the prophets’ and messengers’ advice and abide by their decisions. Their argumentative nature comes to the fore, especially when their own advantage is at stake.

In the days of our Prophet (saas), the hypocrites wanted to separate themselves from the community even though the Qur’an had come and our Prophet (saas) lived among them. Their main reason was that they did not want to fight and were afraid of death. When everything became clear and our Prophet (saas) ordered them to go into battle to win Allah’s favor, they deserted. Some made the excuse that their houses were vulnerable; others argued with him about what was right. The Qur’an speaks of many false excuses. For example, some claimed that they did not know how to fight, that their families keep them occupied, or that it was too hot. Allah’s answer was quite clear: “**The Fire of Hell is much hotter**” (Surat at-Tawba: 81).

All of these things spring from the hypocrites’ great fear of death. However, everyone will die at the appointed time, even if they are at home or

in an impregnable fortress. For this reason, they will be thrown into the deepest place in Hell and will experience the most terrible pangs.

Their argumentativeness comes from the fact that they follow satan and display his attributes:

Satan has gained mastery over them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Such people are the party of satan. No indeed! It is the party of satan who are the losers. (Surat al-Mujadala: 19)

We notice that it is characteristic of hypocrites not to praise Allah. As we said at the beginning, believers constantly praise Him and so do not give satan any opportunity to assault them. In the Qur'an, Allah tells us that satan can exert no power over His faithful servants. Due to their relationship with satan, hypocrites do more than just reflect his character; they are a community that fulfills his commands:

Those who believe fight in the Way of Allah. Those who do not believe fight in the way of false deities. So fight the friends of satan! Satan's scheming is always feeble. (Surat an-Nisa': 76)

Allah has always removed the hypocrites from the Muslim community. He has forbidden them to join with the believers in the struggle against faithlessness because He knows that they would only spread arguments and division. In Surat at-Tawba 47, He tells us that those hypocrites who go into battle with the believers will try to harm them and stir up strife among them. To this end, they will try to make the Prophet (saas) and Islam the cause of argument. But the Qur'an tells us that Allah will never allow this to happen.

As we said before, unlike hypocrites, believers do not have it in their nature to argue with each other, for they have set their hearts only on Allah and thus cannot separate themselves from other believers. They undertake a project only after mutual consultation. If there is any disagreement, they immediately remember Allah and stop talking in order to avoid argument, and take refuge in Allah.

ANSWERS FROM THE QUR'AN TO ARGUMENTATIVE INDIVIDUALS

In the Qur'an, Allah tells believers how to answer those who argue with them:

If anyone argues with you about him after the knowledge that has come to you, say: "Come then! Let us summon our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves. Then let us make earnest supplication and call down the curse of Allah upon the liars." This is the true account: there is no other deity besides Allah. Allah-He is the Almighty, the All-Wise. (Surah Al 'Imran: 61-62)

Both the believers and the unbelievers give an account in front of many witnesses. Each side presents the truth as they see it and condemn those who are liars. In this case, the believers seek to make the unbelievers declare their ideas in public. The Qur'an expresses the truth that when religious morality prevails and everyone practices religion, many individuals will deny their former deeds and desires and try to make it appear that they had been in the company of the believers since the very first beginning. Given that the believers' condemnation of the unbelievers is willed by Allah, it is, therefore, an act of worship.

Here is an answer that believers give to these individuals:

... Allah is our Lord and your Lord. We have our actions and you have your actions. There is no debate between us and you. Allah will gather us all together. He is our final destination. (Surat ash-Shura: 15)

This clear and effective advice is the best and most practical method available for communicators of religion to use. Indeed, these are the key answers that Allah desires for every possible question. The verse below shows the kind of answer that may be given:

If they argue with you, say: "I have submitted myself completely to Allah, and so have all who follow me." Say to those given the Book and those who have no Book: "Have you become Muslim?" If they become Muslim, they have been guided. If they turn away, you are only responsible for transmission. Allah sees His servants. (Surah Al 'Imran: 20)

Say: "Do you argue with us about Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? We have our actions and you have your actions. We act for Him alone." (Surat al Baqara: 139)

The unbelievers and those who argue with the believers all deny the existence of the Hereafter. Allah reveals the answer that must be given to such people:

Those who disbelieve claim that they will never be raised again. Say: "Oh yes, by my Lord, you certainly will be raised again! And then you will be informed about what you did. That is easy for Allah." (Surat at-Taghabun: 7)

Allah gives the following examples for the believers to use when confronted with such people:

TO THOSE WHO CLAIM THEY ARE GOING TO PARADISE

Say: "If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah is for you alone, to the exclusion of all others, then long for death, if you are telling the truth." (Surat al Baqara: 94)

TO THOSE WHO PRACTICE THEIR ANCESTRAL RELIGION

When they are told: "Believe in what Allah has sent down," they say: "Our faith is in what was sent down to us" and they reject anything beyond that, even though it is the truth, confirming what they have. Say: "Why then, if you are believers did you previously kill the Prophets of Allah?" (Surat al-Baqara: 91)

Remember when We made a covenant with you and lifted up the Mount above your heads: "Take hold vigorously of what We have given you and listen." They said: "We hear and disobey." They were made to drink the calf into their hearts because of their unbelief. Say: "If you are believers, what an evil thing your faith has made you do." (Surat al-Baqara: 93)

They worship, instead of Allah, that which can neither harm them nor help them, saying: "These are our intercessors with Allah." Say: "Would you inform Allah of something about which He does not know

either in the heavens or on Earth?" May He be glorified and exalted above what they associate with Him! (Surah Yunus: 18)

Say: "Who provides for you out of heaven and earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who directs the whole affair?" They will say: "Allah." Say: "So will you not guard against evil?" (Surah Yunus: 31)

Say: "Shall I inform you of the greatest losers in their actions?" People whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good. Those are the people who reject their Lord's Signs and the meeting with Him. Their actions will come to nothing and, on the Day of Resurrection, We will not assign them any weight. (Surat al-Kahf: 103-105)

Say: "To whom does Earth belong, and everyone in it, if you have any knowledge?" They will say: "To Allah." Say: "So will you not pay heed?" Say: "Who is the Lord of the Seven Heavens and the Lord of the Mighty Throne?" They will say: "Allah." Say: "So will you not believe?" Say: "In whose hand is the dominion over everything, He who gives protection and from whom no protection can be given, if you have any knowledge?" They will say: "Allah's." Say: "So how have you been bewitched?" (Surat al-Mu'minun: 84-89)

If you ask them: "Who sends down water from the sky, bringing the earth back to life again after it was dead?" they will say: "Allah." Say: "Praise be to Allah." But most of them do not use their intellect. (Surat al-'Ankabut: 63)

If you ask them: "Who created the heavens and Earth?" they will say: "Allah." Say: "So what do you think? If Allah wills harm for me, can those whom you call upon besides Allah remove His harm? Or if He wills mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?" Say: "Allah is enough for me. All those who truly trust put their trust in Him." Say: "My people, do as you think best; that is what I am doing...". (Surat az-Zumar: 38-39)

Those who say: "Allah has made a contract with us that we should not believe in any Messenger until he brings us a sacrifice consumed by fire." Say: "Messengers came to you before me with the Clear Signs and with what you say. So why did you kill them, if you are telling the truth?" (Surah Al 'Imran: 183)

Whenever they commit an indecent act, they say: “We found our fathers doing it and Allah commanded us to do it too.” Say: “Allah does not command indecency. Do you say things about Allah that you do not know?” (Surat al-A’raf: 28)

TO THOSE WHO DENY THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH, RELIGION, AND THE QUR’AN.

Say to those who do not believe: “You will be overwhelmed and crowded into Hell. What an evil resting-place!” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 12)

Say: “O People of the Book, come to a proposition that is the same for us and you-that we should worship none but Allah, associate no partners with Him, and not take one another as lords besides Allah.” If they turn away, say: “Bear witness that we are Muslims.” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 64)

Say: “I am forbidden to worship those you call upon besides Allah.” Say: “I do not follow your whims and desires. If I did, I would go astray and would not be among the guided.” Say: “I stand on a Clear Sign from my Lord, and yet you have denied it. I do not have in my possession that which you are in such haste to bring about. Jurisdiction over it belongs to Allah alone. He tells the truth and He is the Best of Deciders.” Say: “If I had in my possession that which you are in such haste to bring about, the affair between me and you would have been decided. Allah has greatest knowledge of the wrongdoers.” (Surat al-An’am: 56-58)

They do not measure Allah with His true measure when they say: “Allah would not send down anything to a mere human being.” Say: “Who, then, sent down the Book that Musa brought as a Light and Guidance for the people?” You put it down on sheets of paper to display it while concealing much. You were taught things you did not know, neither you nor your forefathers. Say: “Allah!” Then leave them engrossed in playing their games. (Surat al-An’am: 91)

Say to those who do not believe that if they stop, they will be forgiven what is past; but if they return to it, they have the pattern of previous peoples in the past. (Surat al-Anfal: 38)

When Our Clear Signs are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us say: “Bring a Qur’an other than this one or change

it.” Say: “It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow nothing except what is revealed to me. I fear, were I to disobey my Lord, the punishment of a Dreadful Day.” Say: “Had Allah so wished, I would not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you. I lived among you for many years before it came. Will you not use your intellect?” (Surah Yunus: 16)

TO THOSE WHO ASK ABOUT THE FINAL HOUR AND THE PANGS OF HELL

People will ask you about the Last Hour. Say: “Only Allah has knowledge of it. What will make you understand? It may be that the Last Hour is very near.” (Surat al-Ahzab: 63)

Those who do not believe say: “The Hour will never come.” Say: “Yes, by my Lord, it certainly will come!” He is the Knower of the Unseen, Whom not even the weight of the smallest particle eludes, either in the heavens or in the earth; nor is there anything smaller or larger than that which is not in a Clear Book. (Surah Saba’: 3)

They say: “When will this promise come about, if you are telling the truth?” Say: “The knowledge is with Allah alone, and I am only a clear warner.” When they see it right up close, the faces of those who do not believe will be appalled and they will be told: “This is that for which you were calling.” Say: “What do you think? If Allah destroys me and those with me, or if He has mercy on us, who can shelter the unbelievers from a painful punishment?” Say: “He is the All-Merciful. We believe in Him and trust in Him. You will soon know who is clearly misguided.” Say: “What do you think? If, one morning, your water disappears into the earth, who will bring you running water?” (Surat al-Mulk: 25-30)

TO THOSE WHO HATE RELIGION

There you are, loving them when they do not love you, even though you believe in all the Books. When they meet you, they say: "We believe." But when they leave, they bite their fingers out of rage against you. Say: "Die in your rage." Allah knows what your hearts contain. (Surah Al 'Imran: 119)

Say: "O my people, do as you are doing, just as I am doing. You will certainly come to know who will have the best home in the end. The wrongdoers will certainly not be successful." (Surat al-An'am: 135)

Do they have legs with which they can walk? Do they have hands with which they can grasp? Do they have eyes with which they can see? Do they have ears with which they can hear? Say: "Call on your partner-deities. Try all of your wiles against me and grant me no reprieve." (Surat al-A'raf :195)

When We let people taste mercy after hardship has afflicted them, immediately they plot against Our Signs. Say: "Allah is swifter at plotting." Your plotting is recorded by Our Messengers. (Surah Yunus: 21)

When Our Signs are recited to them-Clear Signs-you can detect denial in the unbelievers' faces. They all but assault those who recite Our Signs to them! Say: "Shall I inform you of something worse than that? The Fire that Allah has promised those who do not believe. What an evil destination!" (Surat al-Hajj:72)

TO THOSE WHO WISH TO SEE A SIGN

They ask: "Why has no Sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Allah has the power to send down a Sign." But most of them do not know it. (Surat al-An'am: 37)

TO THOSE WHO WANT TO SEE A MIRACLE

Say: "I do not say to you that I possess the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I only follow what has been revealed to me." Say: "Are the blind the same as those who can see? So will you not reflect?" (Surat al-An'am: 50)

They have sworn by Allah with their most earnest oaths that if a Sign comes to them, they will believe in it. Say: "The Signs are in Allah's control alone." What will make you realize that even if a Sign did come, they would still not believe? (Surat al-An'am: 109)

What are they waiting for but for the angels to come to them, or for your Lord Himself to come, or for one of your Lord's Signs to come? On the day that one of your Lord's Signs does come, no faith which a self professes will be of any use to it if it did not believe before and earn good in its faith. Say: "Wait, then; We too are waiting." (Surat al-An'am: 158)

They say: "Why has a Sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "The Unseen belongs to Allah alone. So wait; I am waiting with you." (Surah Yunus: 20)

Those who do not believe say: "Why has a Sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Allah misguides whoever He wills and guides to Himself all who turn to Him." (Surat ar-Ra'd: 27)

Say: "If there had been angels on Earth going about in peace, We would have sent down to them an angel from heaven as a messenger." Say: "Allah is a sufficient witness between me and you. He is certainly aware of and sees His servants." (Surat al-Isra': 95-96)

They say: "Why have no Signs been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "The Signs are with Allah. I am only a clear warner." (Surat al-Ankabut: 50)

TO THOSE WHO ACCUSE THE PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS OF OPPORTUNISM

They are the ones Allah has guided, so be guided by their guidance. Say: "I do not ask you for any wage for it. It is simply a reminder to all beings." (Surat al-An'am: 90)

Say: "I have not asked you for any wage-it is all for you. My wage is the responsibility of Allah alone. He is witness of everything." (Surah Saba': 47)

TO THOSE WHO CALL THE PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS LIARS

If they call you a liar, say: "Your Lord possesses boundless mercy, but His violent force cannot be averted from those who do evil." (Surat al-An'am: 147)

If they deny you, say: "I have my actions, and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do, and I am not responsible for what you do." (Surah Yunus: 41)

TO THOSE WHO SAY THE PROPHET (saas) INVENTED THE QUR'AN

Do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "Then produce a *surah* like it and call on anyone you can, besides Allah, if you are telling the truth." (Surah Yunus: 38)

Or do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "Then produce ten invented *surahs* like this and call on anyone you can, besides Allah, if you are telling the truth." (Surah Hud: 13)

Or do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "If I have invented it, the crime will be laid at my door. But I am innocent of the crimes that you commit." (Surah Hud: 35)

Say: "If both humanity and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could never produce anything like it, even if they backed each other up." (Surat al-Isra': 88)

Or do they say: "He has invented it"? Say: "If I have invented it, then you possess no power to help me against Allah in any way. He knows best what you hold forth about. He is witness enough between me and you. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful." Say: "I am nothing new among the Messengers. I have no idea what will be done with me or you. I only follow what has been revealed to me. I am only a clear warner." Say: "What do you think? If it is from Allah and you reject it, when a witness from the tribe of Israel testifies to its similarity and believes while you are arrogant...! Allah certainly does not guide those who do wrong." (Surat al-Ahqaf: 8-10)

TO THOSE WHO ASSOCIATE ALLAH WITH HIS CREATURES

Those who associate others with Allah will say: "If Allah had willed, we would not have associated anything with Him, nor would our fathers [have done so], nor would we have made anything forbidden." In the same way the people before them also lied, until they felt Our violent force. Say: "Do you have some knowledge you

can produce for us? You are following nothing but conjecture. You are only guessing.” (Surat al-An’am: 148)

What then of Him Who is standing over every soul, seeing everything it does? Yet still they associate others with Allah! Say: “Name them! Or would you inform Him of something in the earth He does not know, or are they words that are simply guesswork on your part?” However, the plotting of those who do not believe seems good to them and they bar the way. Anyone misguided by Allah has no guide. (Surat ar-Ra’d: 33)

They have made others equal to Allah to misguide people from His Way. Say: “Enjoy yourselves! Your destination is the Fire!” (Surah Ibrahim: 30)

Say: “Have you thought about your partner-deities, those you call upon besides Allah? Show me what they have created of Earth; or do they have a partnership in the heavens?” Have We given them a Book whose Clear Signs they follow? No indeed! The wrongdoers promise each other nothing but delusion. (Surah Fatir: 40)

When harm touches humanity, he calls upon his Lord, repenting to Him. Then when He grants him a blessing from Him, he forgets what he was calling for before and ascribes rivals to Allah, so as to misguide others from His Way. Say: “Enjoy your unbelief for a little while. You are among the Companions of the Fire.” (Surat az-Zumar: 8)

TO THOSE WHO DOUBT

Say: “O humanity, if you are in any doubt about my religion, I do not worship those you worship besides Allah. Rather I worship Allah, Who will take you back to Him, and am commanded to be one of the believers.” (Surah Yunus: 104)

TO THOSE WITHOUT FAITH

Say to those who have no faith: “Do as you think best. That is what we are doing.

And wait. We too are waiting.” (Surah Hud: 121-122)

TO THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE PROPHETS’ AND THE MESSENGERS’ MISSION

Those who do not believe say: “You are not a Messenger.” Say: “Allah is a sufficient witness between you and me, and anyone else who has knowledge of the Book.” (Surat ar-Ra’d: 43)

TO THOSE WHO DENY THE RESURRECTION

They say: “What! When we are bones and crumbled dust, will we then be raised up as a new creation!” Say: “It would not matter if you were rock or iron or indeed any created thing that you think is harder still!” They will say: “Who will bring us back again?” Say: “He Who brought you into being in the first place.” They will shake their heads at you and ask: ‘When will this happen?’ Say: “It may well be that it is very near.” (Surat al-Isra’: 49-51)

He makes likenesses of Us and forgets his own creation, saying: “Who will give life to bones when they are decayed?” Say “He Who made them in the first place will bring them back to life. He has total knowledge of each created thing.” (Surah Ya Sin: 78-79)

Say: “Yes, and you will be (raised up) in a despicable state.” (Surat as-Saffat: 18)

TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE THE BELIEVERS

If they argue with you, say: “Allah knows best what you are doing. Allah will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection regarding everything about which you differed.” (Surat al-Hajj: 68-69)

ABOUT THE PUNISHMENT ALLAH WILL GIVE TO THE UNBELIEVERS

Say: “Shall I tell you of a reward with Allah far worse than that: that of those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He is angry—turning some of them into monkeys and into pigs—and who worshipped false deities? Such people are in a worse situation and further from the right way.” (Surat al-Ma’ida: 60)

AN EXPLANATION OF HUMAN HELPLESSNESS

Say: “What do you think? If Allah's punishment were to come upon you or the Hour, would you call on other than Allah, if you are being truthful?” (Surat al-An’am: 40)

Say: "What do you think? If Allah took away your hearing and your sight and sealed up your hearts, what deity is there, other than Allah, who could give them back to you?" Look how We vary the Signs, yet still they turn away! Say: "What do you think? If Allah's punishment were to come upon you suddenly by night or openly by day, would any but those who do wrong be destroyed?" (Surat al-An'am: 46-47)

Say: "Who rescues you from the darkness of the land and sea? You call on Him humbly and secretly: 'If you rescue us from this, we will truly be among the thankful.'" Say: "Allah rescues you from it and from every plight. Then you associate others with Him." Say: "He possesses the power to send you punishment from above your heads or from beneath your feet, or to confuse you in sects and make you taste one another's violence." Look how We vary the Signs so that, hopefully, they will understand. (Surat al-An'am: 63-65)

Say: "What do you think? If Allah made it permanent night for you until the Day of Resurrection, what deity is there other than Allah to bring you light? Do you not then hear?" Say: "What do you think? If Allah made it permanent day for you till the Day of Resurrection, what deity is there other than Allah to bring you night to rest in? Do you not then see?" (Surat al-Qasas: 71-72)

Say: "Who is going to shield you from Allah if He wills evil for you or wills mercy for you?" They will find no one to protect or help them besides Allah. (Surat al-Ahzab: 17)

Say: "My Lord expands or restricts the provision of anyone He wills. But the majority of humanity do not know it." (Surah Saba': 36)

ARGUMENTS AMONG THE PEOPLE IN HELL

All this is certainly true-the bickering of the People of the Fire. (Surah Sad: 64)

The Qur'an tells us that at the point of death, the unbelievers will experience great pains and violent tremors, and that angels will announce to them the eternal sufferings of Hell. This is described in the Qur'an as the angles taking them in death and beating their backs and faces with their wings.

How will it be when the angels take them in death, beating their faces and their backs? The angels ask those they take while they are wronging themselves: “What were your circumstances?” They reply: “We were oppressed on Earth.” They say: “Was Allah’s Earth not wide enough for you to have migrated elsewhere?” The shelter of such people will be Hell. What an evil destination! Except for those men, women, and children who really are oppressed and do not have any other possibility and are not guided to any way. It may well be that Allah will pardon them. Allah is Ever-Pardoning, Ever-Forgiving. (Surat an-Nisa’: 97-99)

We can see that the unbelievers claim of weakness, helplessness, and blamelessness at the hour of their death will be of no avail. This will only increase their hopelessness and draw them further into the fire of Hell. For this reason, every individual in Hell is prepared to “sell” his or her neighbor so that they will experience the same (and even worse) misery.

... Each time a nation enters, it will curse its sister nation, until, when they are all gathered together in it, the last of them will say to the first: “Our Lord, those are the ones who misguided us, so give them a double punishment in the Fire.” He will say: “Each will receive double. But you do not know it.” (Surat al-A’raf: 38)

In Hell, these people will wish a double portion of misery and damnation for those “lords” and “masters” who led them astray. The mutual friendship and support they pretended to have, as well as their common assaults against the believers, will have been of no use. No bond of friendship or relation will exist any more. Arguing in Hell with each other, they will say: **“And now we have no one to intercede for us. We do not have a single loyal friend”** (Surat ash-Shu’ara’: 100-101).

On the contrary, those in Hell will try **“to place their friends who misguided them beneath their feet so that they will be among the lowest of the low”** (Surah Fussilat: 29). In this environment of conflict and chaos, they will argue and level accusations at each other:

Those who do not believe say: “We will never believe in this Qur’an, nor in what came before it.” If only you could see when the wrongdoers, standing in the presence of their Lord, cast accusations back and forth at each other. Those deemed weak will say to those deemed great: “Were it not for you, we would have been believers!” (Surah Saba’: 31)

When they are squabbling with one another in the Fire, the weak will say to those deemed great: “We were your followers, so why do you not relieve us of a portion of the Fire?” (Surah Ghafir: 47)

We see that those in Hell accuse each other while trying to make themselves appear innocent and blameless. In their earthly lives, they denied Allah’s existence and religious morality and were determined not to believe in the Qur’an; when they come to Hell, they clearly show their hypocrisy by saying: **“Were it not for you, we would have been believers!” (Surah Saba’: 31).**

Another interesting point is this: even if these people are not believers and are determined not to believe, there are others who are prepared to put forth the extra effort to divert them from the straight path:

Those deemed weak will say to those deemed great: “No, it was your scheming night and day when you commanded us to reject Allah and assign equals to Him.” (Surah Saba’: 33)

“You used to come at us from a position of power.” (Surat as-Saffat: 28)

Those people who organize themselves to divert others from Allah’s true path are, without any doubt, the squadron of satan.

The manner of conversation in the Qur’an

As we said at the beginning, it is very important for believers to mention the name of Allah when talking among themselves, for this is an act of worship. In an environment of mutual love and respect, as well as when reciting and studying the Qur’an together, they speak of matters of faith in an elevated style. It is important that such an environment prevails and that an elevated style of conversation be maintained:

Say to My servants that they should only say the best. Satan wants to stir up trouble between them... (Surat al-Isra’: 53)

Those to whom Allah has taught the right path are defined as those who **“listen well to what is said and follow the best of it” (Surat az-Zumar: 18).**

Allah says the following about the believers’ houses: **“...houses that Allah has permitted to be built and in which His name is remembered”** and in which believers **“proclaim His glory morning and evening” (Surat an-Nur: 36).** In these houses, believers converse among themselves and remember Allah. In addition, **“The believers are those whose hearts**

tremble when Allah is mentioned” (Surat al-Anfal: 2). For this reason, remembering Allah is an internal and sincere thing for them, and every word is a word of wisdom. It is a pure conversation bedecked with examples from the Qur’an.

Indeed, believers try their best to establish the environment of Paradise in this world. To this end, their houses are places where conversations resembling those of Paradise occur; they are places of laughter and joyful interchange. At the same time, they are places where the Qur’an’s verses are recited and wisdom is sought. The Qur’an describes the conversations held in Paradise as taking place from facing thrones, where Allah is mentioned and all nonsense is banished. All believers give thanks to Allah, Who shows mercy and forgives.

Indeed, they hold similar conversations and prayers in this world. According to the Qur’an, a believer’s greatest act of worship is to praise Allah. As there is no special time or place to do this, Allah may be remembered in any place in a believer’s conversation:

(People with intelligence are) those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and Earth: “Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 191)

They may talk about very different things, but every conversation is related to Allah. For this reason, their conversations do not descend to the level of nonsense (conversations that do not mention Allah and reach conclusions that are not related to Him are vain and irritating to the human spirit). For this reason, for example, when believers see a nice, aesthetically pleasing home, they talk about it, because such homes are blessings of Paradise.

Speaking about such a topic increases their desire for Paradise. They do not forget that a beautiful house is a transitory thing doomed to decay and that Allah created it to test them. Unbelievers can talk about such a house for hours on end, but the difference between them and believers is that the latter remember Allah in all of their conversations for their **“hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah”** (Surat ar-Ra’d: 28).

Allah says that the believers are **“... not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah”** (Surat an-Nur: 37). People can praise Allah individually or in a group. Of course, praising Him privately is very important, because this spiritual state will be reflected in all of a person’s daily activities. In this way, he or she will pass every test without losing his or her attachment to Allah, and will do everything with the intention of earning His reward.

The manner of conversation

People's love and respect for others is reflected in their conversations. For this reason, all conversations should adhere to Islamic morality so that everybody can benefit from them.

Avoiding being a “know-it-all”

People who think that they know everything create tension in a conversation. Such individuals always impose their own ideas and speak without respect for others. They are not aware that their approach is very distasteful to others.

Giving others the opportunity to speak

Listening politely without interruption and trying to understand what the other person is saying is, one hopes, pleasing to Allah. Such an attitude shows respect for the speaker and for what is being said. It is wrong to think that people “who suppress others by adopting an over-emphatic tone of voice are worthy of respect.” On the contrary, those who raise their voices, interrupt others, and monopolize the conversation are showing their ignorance. Eventually, such a conversation becomes a torture to others. Their silence does not mean that they are listening or paying attention; rather, it generally means that they are just being polite.

It is natural that an expert can speak on a particular matter. But everyone can express their own ideas and opinions on a general matter. In this way, everyone can learn what others think and form an idea of their characters. It is very wrong to think, for example, “I know more than him, so why should he talk?” or “If you don't know, be quiet.” One person may know less than another about a certain subject; however, by Allah's gift of wisdom, the one who knows less may be more aware of the subject's intricate nature. On the other hand, a person who knows about a subject in great detail may get submerged in those details and be unable to see the underlying logic. For this reason, it is important for everyone to express his or her own ideas so that new ideas and views can emerge.

Avoiding to put oneself in the front in a conversation

People usually do not pay attention when others are speaking; they do not listen and analyze what they hear. We often see this on television discussions panels. Two experts in their fields may be completely rude and disrespectful to each other; instead of learning from the other person, they arrogantly try to impose their own views.

Muslims do not have the egotistical desire to put themselves in the front, to prevail, or to have the last word in an argument. For this reason, their attitude is one of quiet moderation. Their politeness comes from the Qur'an's

moral teachings, according to which they are to give precedence to each other and benefit from what other people say.

Avoiding pointless conversations

Many people speak just to show how much they know, giving their listeners useless information on useless subjects. Sometimes it takes them two or three hours to say something they could have said in a few short sentences. Rather than producing the desired effect in the hearts of their listeners, they only irritate them instead. No one likes to listen to such people.

One of the main things to notice in a conversation is whether the speaker goes on at such great length that his or her counterpart becomes uncomfortable. Muslims are not to engage in an endless monologue and thus deny everyone else the opportunity to speak. Rather, they are to speak as clearly as possible, express the subject's essence effectively, and always know the reasons behind what they are saying so that the other participants will benefit.

Avoiding long, repetitious sentences

Speaking in long sentences also annoys a listener. Breaks must be allowed in a conversation so that other people can express their ideas. The speaker must also avoid repetition and be concise in his or her points. In other words, the speaker should not jump from one subject to another when the other party wishes to say something; rather, he or she should pay close attention and not oblige others to endure a monologue, especially if they are short of time or need to be elsewhere.

Using a moderate tone of voice

Some people do not use the right tone of voice during a conversation. They practically shout while making their point, thereby intimidating, persuading, or silencing all others in order to get the upper hand. But Muslims use a moderate tone of voice:

Be moderate in your tread and lower your voice. The most hateful of voices is the donkey's bray. (Surah Luqman: 19)

Speaking in a measured, polite, and respectful manner

As befits their fine moral character, Muslims speak in a measured, polite, and respectful manner. The other person's age, cultural level, intelligence, wealth, or poverty do not matter, for a Muslim's manner of speaking is not affected by such transient factors: **"Over everyone with knowledge is a Knower"** (Surah Yusuf: 76). In their modesty, believers value what other people think.

Speaking about religion and sacred things

Making jokes or ironic statements about religion and sacred things must be avoided at all costs. Those who indulge in such practices must be interrupted, informed of their mistake, and be warned of their grave error. Even laughing in such instances is just as serious, and Muslims must protest and clearly express their uneasiness if such things occur.

It has been sent down to you in the Book that, when you hear Allah's Signs being rejected and mocked at by people, you must not sit with them until they start talking of other things. If you do, you are just the same as them. Allah will gather all the hypocrites and unbelievers into Hell. (Surat an-Nisa': 140)

Making jokes about religion and sacred things, telling amusing stories, giving inappropriate explanations, and relating anecdotes about Paradise and Hell are kinds of anti-religious propaganda. All Muslims must avoid taking part in such things, for Allah says that only people without faith indulge in them:

If you ask them, they will say: "We were only joking and playing around." Say: "Would you make a mockery of Allah and of His Signs and of His Messenger?" (Surat at-Tawba: 65)

Thus, Muslims must carefully avoid such situations and react sharply to those who make such comments. This reaction is in keeping with the Qur'an's moral teachings.

Giving the best response

Believers live according to the Qur'an's moral teachings in order to please Allah. They know that if they regard other people as autonomous individuals, each of whom is to be approached with a different attitude, they are not living according to its teachings. For this reason, they act with the awareness that everyone they meet is part of the test that Allah has created for them and that they are representing Islamic morality. They try to respond to what others say as best as they can. Allah describes this morality:

When you are greeted with a greeting, return the greeting or improve on it. Allah takes account of everything. (Surat an-Nisa': 86)

This manner of speaking, which the Almighty Lord revealed in the Qur'an and through our Prophet (saas), will bring countless good things to people in both worlds, for:

Do you not see how Allah makes a metaphor of a good word: a good tree whose roots are firm and whose branches are in heaven? It bears fruit regularly by its Lord's permission. Allah makes metaphors for people so that, hopefully, they will pay heed. (Surah Ibrahim: 24-25)

In the Qur'an, Allah tells us that talking with others about religion is one of the most important acts of worship that believers can perform. This worship encompasses every aspect of life. In their words, demeanor, and attitudes, believers are responsible every moment for telling others about the good moral life and for representing of Islam.

Their conversations among themselves are actually mutual communications of religion. They call upon each other to follow the Qur'an's commands and to show its morality in their lives. In short, communicating religion is part of each believer's identity. On the other hand, as the Qur'an tells us, arguing belongs to the unbelievers' general make-up. Therefore, believers must always be careful of how they spread religion so that such efforts do not tend toward argument. Arguing has no place in the Qur'anic morality.

In this book, we will examine with detailed reference to the Qur'an the methods and rationale that believers should use when communicating religion to others and see the satanic nature of arguing.