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Seeking Nearness to God

The ultimate aim of the journey of a believer is to get close to Allah. To have a position with Him that is special. It is the cherished goal and hope of all those who love Allah. Life in this world is a journey towards that goal. Every action carried out, every deed performed is a step forward in that direction. Human beings have been given life in this world, as an opportunity to achieve the pleasure of Allah, to serve and worship Him and to achieve nearness to Him.

The Holy Qur'an talks about the believers who enjoy a special position with Allah:

“Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep aloof from what is vain, and who are givers of the poor-rate. . .” (23:1-3)

“Those only are believers whose hearts become full of awe when Allah is mentioned, and when His communications are recited to them, they increase them in faith, and in their Lord do they trust.” (8:2)

The following Hadithe Qudsi show how close the relationship between Allah the human being can be. Allah says:

When I find out that a person remembers Me frequently, I will look after his affairs, become his company, speak with him, and become his intimate friend.

Whenever I know My servant is frequently engaged in remembering Me, I will make him desire to pray and whisper to Me. When My servant becomes such, I will prevent him from any wrongdoing when he decided upon it. Those are My true friends. If I intend to destroy the earth and punish men, I will forego destruction and punishment for their sake.

Why should a believer seek nearness to Allah?

The following are some reasons and benefits of seeking nearness to Allah.

1. Allah is Merciful and loves His Creatures

There is no being who loves the human being more and cares more for his needs than his Creator. Although people sometimes think that God puts a lot of demands on them, and is very strict with them, that He will punish us as soon as they do wrong, this is a great misconception. Allah wants only what is good for human beings.

Allah loves the best of His creations, the human being. One day the Holy Prophet (S) was walking with his companions when he saw a mother bird with her babies in a nest. The mother bird was feeding the small ones some worms. So tender and gentle were her actions, that the companions were awe-struck at this display of love. The Prophet (S) smiled and said, "Are you surprised at the love this mother bird has for her babies? Let me inform you that Allah loves His creatures, the human beings seventy times more than this mother!"

Because He loves the human being, Allah has bestowed upon him many favors. He has given him numerous blessings to enjoy in this world. He has sent rules for his guidance so that the human being will be assured of success in both the worlds. He has promised a great reward for those who obey, and punishment for those who disobey His rules.

In His infinite mercy, Almighty Allah has promised to multiply the reward of good deeds by ten, while the punishment of a sin will only be one. He has ordered the angels to record a good deed as soon as the intention is made, while a sin is recorded only after it is done. A sin can be erased through seeking forgiveness. Allah has encouraged us to ask from Him, to pray to Him, to seek His forgiveness, so that we should be happy. None of this makes a difference to Him, for He is Needless of our prayers and worship. But it makes a big difference to us, to our status with Him, and consequently, our place in the eternal world to come.

When someone loves us, we are naturally drawn to him. We would like to be close to him, and enjoy a loving fulfilling relationship. Knowing that one is loved brings great peace and joy to the human heart. What more could the human being ask for than to be loved by the Power that reigns Supreme in the universe? The One who has control of all things, and the One who invites the human being to Him and offers him love and mercy. Unfortunate is the person who does not recognize the great power of Allah's love, and does not seek nearness to Allah to ease the aches and pains of daily life.

The following hadith tell us about the love and mercy of Allah for the human being:

Allah is more merciful on you than you are to yourselves. Imam Ali (a)

2. It is the only achievement that will give true peace and happiness

People seek happiness and pleasure for themselves. They try out different ways of achieving that. Some believe it come with wealth, so they spend a lot of time amassing it. Others believe it comes from a good

job, or a high position in society. They put in a lot of efforts to secure a prestigious job. But most people discover that this type of success does not really bring satisfaction to the human heart.

Material wealth and success are poor substitutes for the emptiness in the lives and hearts of people. The modern world is struggling furiously to achieve material success, to have access to all forms of comforts and pleasures for the human being. In this mad race to achieve and amass, human beings have strayed from the path of true happiness. That is why there is an increase in emotional and psychological problems in the world today.

True happiness is derived from faith and love for the God who created us. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

“Surely by the Remembrance of Allah are hearts set at rest” (13:28).

A hadith of Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq (a) says: Joy and peace lie in the Pleasure of Allah, and in certainty (of belief in Allah). Faith and trust in Allah bring the assurance of a support that will never fade or weaken. With that assurance comes the peace of mind that whatever happens, a human being is never alone. Allah, who loves him, is always with him to help and support him. No material possession or glory can bring that unfailing assurance of support.

3. It will guarantee success in the world and the Hereafter

A successful life is one that has accomplished its purpose of creation. Human beings have been created to know the greatness of the Almighty and worship Him. The human being who seeks nearness to Allah and achieves a degree of it, has fulfilled the purpose behind his creation.

Allah describes true success to be achieved through His pleasure. He says:

Then give to the near of kin his due, and to the needy and the wayfarer, this is best for those who desire Allah's pleasure, and these it is who are successful. (30:38)

Only Allah can give success in both the worlds. The one who relies totally on him and hopes only from Him, will achieve what he wants in this world as well as the Hereafter.

How to seek Nearness to Allah

In order to attain God's nearness, a believer uses various means. Some of these include:

- Reading and Understanding the Holy Qur'an
- Remembrance of Allah through Supplication and prayer
- Seeking forgiveness

Each of these means has been included as a separate lesson in this manual.

Seeking Nearness in Ramadhan

This type of spiritual journey is undertaken intensively during the month of Ramadhan. Through increased prayers and worship, a believer tries in this month to cover great distances in his lifelong journey towards God. The incentives to earn extra reward and mercy from Allah in this month encourage more good deeds and increased remembrance of Allah. This brings a believer very close to Allah.

Exercises

1. Write an essay on one of the following:

- The love of Allah for the human being
- How trust and faith in Allah brings peace to the human heart.

2. What are some signs of those who love Allah? Write down the deeds and actions that occupy their days.

3. Recite the following Dua from Saheefa as-Sajjadiyyah: Dua no. 77, Whispered Prayer of those who love Allah. Name ten qualities of those who love Allah, according to this prayer.

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