



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

HOW TO KEEP ISLAM SIMPLE AND ENJOYABLE

Some of my revert students were complaining, that before they took shahadah, they were only advised to pray 5 times a day, fasting in Ramadan, etc. Now people are slowly advising them to do more than what they thought they would need to do in Islam – fasting in Arafah and Ashoora, Mondays and Thursdays, the sunnah rawatib, witr prayers, etc. If we are not careful, these Muslims will get tired and shaytan will influence them to stop practising. How would we overcome these issues inshaAllah?

1. Allah intends for you ease

The religion is easy, beautiful and simply perfect. Why make things hard? The Qur'an reads: "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship." (Qur'an, 2:185)

This verse explains that Islam is easy to follow and rather encourages us to create ease in religion. Unfortunately some Muslims, including some reverts, are under the misconception that the more stringent they are in following religion, the more pious they become. This is totally in contradiction to what our religion teaches us. The misconception is a result of lack of understanding of religion and at times drives some people away from religion, mainly because of the way it is presented to them.

Some people have aimed at causing religion to deviate from its essence, preventing religion from being practiced by attempting to add on many difficult practices and superstitions to it. Such practices have sadly resulted in people deviating from Islam. However from the information set forth in the verses in the Qur'an and the replete stories and Hadiths by the Prophet (peace be upon him), we can ascertain that it is easy for sincere Muslims to be good Muslims. In this life we are tested and according to the morals and faith we show in this world God determines where our real life will be lived, that being Hell or Heaven. The test is quite easy; Allah wishes for us simply to live the life that brings happiness and peace in this world; in short to live our life in moderation.

On the authority of Abi Abdillah Jabir ibn Abdillah al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with both of them) who said: "A man asked the Prophet (sallaAllahu 'alayhi wasallam), "Tell me if I were to perform the obligatory [prayers], fast in Ramadhan, treat the lawful as permissible and treat the forbidden as unlawful and I do not add anything to that, would I enter Paradise?" He [the Prophet (sallaAllahu 'alayhi wasallam)] answered, "Yes".

Recorded by Muslim

2. Don't go to extremes

It is known in fact that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always resisted any tendency toward religious excessiveness. He once said to his close companion Abdullah ibn Amr: "Have I heard right that you fast everyday and stand in prayer all night?" Abdullah replied: "Yes, O Messenger of Allah"

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Do not do that. Fast, as well as, eat and drink. Stand in prayer, as well as, sleep. This is because your body has a right upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, and your guest has a right upon you." (Al-Bukhari, 127)

This Hadith indicates that it is significant to maintain a delicate balance between the various obligations that demand our attention; between our obligations to God, our obligations toward others and our obligations toward ourselves. This is also demonstrated in many verses in the Qur'an illustrating that Allah is both merciful and kind. Confucius once said: "Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated." This deeply resonates as we read stories of how people strayed away from Islam because they failed to realise its beauty and were intimidated by restrictions feeling their life would be unhappy with Islam's boundaries. There indeed is a need to clarify such misconceptions, and encourage and remind both born Muslim and reverts to question where did their beliefs originate from. Was it from the Qur'an and Sunnah or a tradition they have been following without knowing its origin?

In all reality, Allah created us and in turn He knows what's best for us and those who do not know these truths feel they may lead happier and more comfortable lives when the limits are removed. Allah says in the Qur'an to pray for both the good in this world and the good in the Hereafter (2:201)

It also speaks about the enjoyment of life: “O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer, eat and drink but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not wasters. Say: ‘who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the things clean and pure which He has provided for sustenance.’” (Qur’an, 7:31-32)

Concerning matters of practice in Islam we have been taught that the rule is that you are expected to follow the truth as much as is possible. Allah has promised that His expectations are simple. However, in order to follow them we need to understand; in turn allowing that this strategy would ensure things are kept simple.

In sharing the message of Islam with people, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was advised in the Qur’an: “It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. If you were severe or hardhearted, they would have broken away from you’.” (Qur’an, 3:159)

It is on this note that when the Prophet SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam sent his companions to teach Islam to the people he advised them: “Facilitate religious matters to people and do not make things difficult. Obey each other and do not differ amongst yourselves.” (Al-Bukhari, 69)

Allah has created a natural balance between what is easy to follow for humans and what is the minimal requirement needed to be a morally, ethically and spiritually pious person. This can be shown for example when we increase the price of a commodity, or make things more stringent, as mentioned earlier, in religion we will find lesser people wanting to buy that commodity.

However, we must remember that easiness in religion has to be done in the way that Allah wants us to do it. It should not be mistaken for casualness. This is simply a reminder for all including myself as sometimes Satan attempts to divert us from religion, from Allah’s commands and good morals and even uses negative force on faith. By insinuating unfounded suspicions in our thoughts, suggesting faithlessness or through actions and speeches, Satan tries to divert us from Islam and or its simplicity setting up many different traps for us. In short, Satan is our enemy, as mentioned in the Qur’an which narrates: “You who believe enter Islam totally. Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan he is an outright enemy to you.” (Qur’an, 2:208)

3. A balanced religion

One of the main features of Islam is that it is a balanced religion. It is known that whenever the Prophet had to choose between two options, he always chose the easier, unless it was explicitly forbidden. This again proves the beauty of Islam and Allah's mercy toward us.

While aiming to reach the afore mentioned balances between human spiritual needs and material needs I have personally come to realise it can be done by simplifying our life and lightening our material baggage by focusing more on our spiritual and mental needs.

While I am not suggesting making vows of poverty, I support the idea of reducing our quest for material possession as one easy and balanced form of working in this world and doing good deeds for the next world.

I have learned one form of getting closer to Allah and obeying one of Islam's pillars may be accomplished as we offer charity bringing happiness to those less fortunate. We must raise our children and remind ourselves that we can only keep what we have, by giving it away; somewhat like paying it forward, but for the afterlife if you may say so.

Balancing between individual rights and responsibilities, we find that as life continues to bring us down many familiar journeys, one of those being a quest of living, we must work toward making everything simpler including our worships if we are to continue on our steady pace toward our ultimate goal, Heaven.

Bear in mind we must allow others to influence us positively whenever we are going wrong. After all, God has promised that He is not going to make any soul accountable for anything more than what his potential is (2: 286), promising that He will forgive those who repent.

Declare (O Muhammad ) unto My slaves, that truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful.

And that My Torment is indeed the most painful torment.

15: 49-50

In the above verse – Allah Mentioned His Mercy first, then His Anger.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "When Allah completed the creation, he wrote in his book with him upon the throne: Verily, my mercy prevails over my wrath."

Source: Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3022, Şaḥīḥ Muslim 2751

Allah even Forgive the man who killed 99 men.

4. Islam is NOT just about halal and haram

Many people are obsessed with these terms. Everything is haram to them. Islam is NOT meant to make our lives difficult. Some people also used this platform to show off their knowledge....when actually particular hadiths and verses of the Qur'an is taken out of context. They look down on others who are not following the particular hadiths that they somehow thought they knew.

5. Islam is NOT just about how harsh Allah is, and NOT only about His Punishments

Islam is not about only "if you disobey Allah, you will be punished". Allah has Given us plenty of opportunity to repent. He also has a Name particular for this aspect - Al Haleem - The Forbearing One.

And your Lord is Most Forgiving, Owner of Mercy. Were He to call them to account for what they have earned, then surely, He would have hastened their punishment. But they have their appointed time, beyond which they will find no escape. 18: 58

And if Allah were to punish men for that which they earned, He would not leave a moving (living) creature on the surface of the earth, but He gives them respite to an appointed term, and when their term comes, then verily, Allah is Ever All-Seer of His slaves 35: 45

It is reported that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, "Truly the Angel on the left [of a person] withholds from recording the sinful deed committed by the Muslim servant who sinned for a period six 'hours'. If the servant regrets committing the sin and asks Allah for forgiveness, the Angel does not write down his sin. Otherwise, the angel records it as one bad deed." [Tabarani, Mu`jam al-Kabir]

In fact we have been informed on the rewards for doing good deeds and the sins recorded for an evil action:

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Ibn Abbas reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah has recorded good and evil deeds and he made them clear. Whoever intends to perform a good deed but does not do it, then Allah will record it as a complete good deed. If he intends to do it and does so, then Allah Almighty will record it as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times as much or even more. If he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, then Allah will record for him one complete good deed. If he does it, then Allah will record for him a single evil deed."

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6126, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 131

Allah reserves one whole month of Ramadan for forgiveness – shaytan is locked up.

Arafah – sins of 2 years expiated for those who fast, Ashoora – one year sins forgiven for those who fast, etc

6. Concentrate on the obligations first

Obligations must be taken care first in Islam because leaving out obligations is a major sin. Major sins must be avoided – as ONLY sincere repentance, and an Accepted Hajj will expiate major sins (besides Hijrah and taking shahadah)

The Obligatory Deeds May Be Divided Into The Following Four Categories

- (1) The obligatory deeds (feelings and emotions) of the heart:
- (2) The ritual pillars of Islam:
- (3) The other obligatory acts: reciting the Qur'an, taking care of parents, etc
- (4) Abstaining from the forbidden acts:

If a person fulfills only the obligatory acts in their proper fashion, he should be able to reach a certain level of spiritual purification. However, most likely, the process of purification will not stop at the obligatory deeds alone. The feeling and love for more purifying acts will flow and the believer will seek other righteous deeds that will bring him even closer to Allah. Hence, the third step in the purification of one's soul is the performance of the voluntary deeds after one has attended to the deeds that are obligatory upon him.

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The voluntary deeds include all of the deeds that are not strictly obligated and which have some sign that they are praiseworthy acts. These deeds are also at different levels of virtue. Some virtuous deeds were greatly emphasized by the Prophet (peace be upon him) while others were not so emphasized. In other words, some voluntary deeds are much more virtuous than others. The more virtuous a voluntary deed, the closer it takes a person to Allah.

In referring to the very important hadith qudsi referred to herein more than once, in which the Allah has stated, "My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties that I have imposed upon him; and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works such that I love him." (Bukhari)

Finally, it is very important to note – and it is a great blessing from Allah – that this path is not a path that necessarily takes a long amount of time or requires that the person pass through certain stages. A person can become one of the purified and devoted servants of Allah very quickly by sincerity and devotion to Allah. This true sincerity and devotion may come after he performs only a few deeds. Indeed, from the outset, he may perform those deeds that are obligatory upon him and he becomes beloved to Allah. Then he continues on that path, with Allah guiding him to what is good and proper. This will be a sign that he is continuing as one of Allah's auliya (devoted servants). Again, this "easy path" is part of the great mercy and blessings of Allah.

A conclusion from the hadith above is that some believers move even closer to Allah by not only fulfilling the obligatory duties but by additionally performing the voluntary deeds (and these are numerous). When a person performs the obligatory deeds, he demonstrates his willingness to submit to Allah. In addition, he is doing what he needs to do to protect himself from Allah's punishment. However, if on top of those deeds he also performs voluntary deeds, this demonstrates his sincerity to Allah and his true willingness to please Allah. This is no longer a matter of fulfilling a command from Allah or rescuing oneself from punishment. Now one is doing the acts to get even closer and become more beloved to Allah.

Therefore, it is no wonder that such people who perform the voluntary deeds (which includes staying away from the disliked deeds) receive a special love from Allah in both this life and in the Hereafter. Allah says about such a servant in the hadith quoted earlier, "My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works such that I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask of Me, I would surely give him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it." (Bukhari)

In this hadith, Allah describes those persons who have earned His love. This makes this a most important hadith. This is the goal of the true believers: to purify oneself by worshiping Allah properly and, thereby, gain the love, mercy, pleasure and forgiveness of Allah. In other words, the goal is to become a wali (a true devoted servant) of Allah. As discussed in a previous chapter, this is the greatest achievement. Indeed, this is the achievement that no one could ever take from a person. Anyone, by Allah's leave, may destroy whatever another person possesses and prizes of this world but no one can ever touch his religion (which is first and foremost in his heart) and his relationship to Allah.

Allah, the Creator and Fashioner of humans, has obligated certain deeds. Those are deeds that are needed by all humans for the purification of their souls. Beyond those deeds, though, Allah has left the door wide open for individuals to concentrate on those deeds that they are most inclined to. For example, some people are dedicated to the voluntary prayers. They receive great increases in their faith and benefit from them. They feel sorrow whenever they miss those prayers. Hence, they tend to them to the best of their ability. Those voluntary prayers in addition to the general obligatory deeds may be the way that they get closer to Allah. It may be the key to their entering Paradise. Others may be attracted to fasting, charity or the pilgrimage.

There are yet others who are more inclined to doing good toward others. They perform the obligatory deeds and then beyond that they spend their time tending to others' needs. Those good voluntary deeds bring them closer to Allah and more beloved to Him. Yet others are attracted to voluntary Jihad, teaching the religion, calling non-Muslims to Islam and so forth. When these people tend to those matters, they become the key by which they come closer to Allah and enter Paradise. Someone else might do a little of all of the different types of voluntary deeds and that is what makes him beloved to Allah.^(Ibn al Qayyim)

This reality is all by the mercy of Allah. Beyond the obligatory deeds, people are free to pursue those good voluntary deeds that they are most attracted to. There are so many areas of voluntary deeds that it seems inconceivable that a person could not find some voluntary deed or deeds that he would like to perform in order to get closer to Allah. Allah's path to paradise is wide enough to accommodate all of those different leanings. However, this is all dependent on the individual first fulfilling, in general, the obligatory deeds. If the person does not do that, then he may not be on the straight path at all.

7. Enjoy the acts of worship

We must enjoy the fact that we are doing an obligation for the love of the One who Gives us everything, and for the One Whom we will meet in the Day of Judgment.

“Only those believe in Our *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.), who, when they are reminded of them fall down prostrate, and glorify the Praises of their Lord, and they are not proud.

Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord in fear and hope, and they spend (charity in Allah's Cause) out of what We have bestowed on them.

No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.

Is then he who is a believer like him who is *Fasiq* (disbeliever and disobedient to Allah)? Not equal are they.

As for those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, for them are Gardens (Paradise) as an entertainment, for what they used to do.”

32: 15-19

8. Be thankful that we have been chosen by Allah to be Muslims

Not everyone has the passport to enter Jannah. Being a Muslims is the first step to enter Jannah

Du'a

"My Lord! Inspire and bestow upon me the power and ability that I may be grateful for Your Favours which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do righteous good deeds that will please You, and admit me by Your Mercy among Your righteous slaves." 27: 19

"My Lord! Grant me the power and ability that I may be grateful for Your Favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do righteous good deeds, such as please You, and make my off-spring good. Truly, I have turned to You in repentance, and truly, I am one of the Muslims (submitting to Your Will)." 46: 15

Muadh`adh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

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The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) held my hand and said, "O Mu`adh, By Allah, I love you and advise you not to miss supplicating after every Salat (prayer) saying: `Allahumma a`inni `ala dhikrika wa shukrika, wa husni `ibadatika,' (O Allah, help me remember You, expressing gratitude to You and worship You in the best manner)". Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i

SO, HOW TO ENSURE THAT WE TRY OUR BEST TO DO AS MUCH AS WE CAN WITHOUT GETTING TIRED?

1. Focus on seeking guidance from Allah
 - Salat
 - Reciting Qur'an with understanding
 - Du'a
2. Seek more knowledge
3. Do more dhikr - so that you also gain Allah's Love
4. Think about the Blessings of Allah
5. Refrain from disobeying Allah - think about the consequence
6. Think about Jannah that has been promised to the doers of good
7. Think about the numerous sins that we do so that we do more good deeds to balance the scale of good deeds
8. Get good companions
9. Seek protection from shaytan
10. Culture and customs - eliminate those which may hinder us from the right path
11. Read on the seerah of the prophet Muhamad SallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam and the stories of the companions.
12. Remember that death can come at any time
13. Remember that you only have one chance