



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS THE MOST MERCIFUL

IMPORTANT TRAITS TO POSSESS THIS RAMADAN INSHAALLAH

1. Being grateful to Allah
2. Al Muhasabah
3. Seeking forgiveness from others
4. Tadabbur
5. Crying
6. Being generous
7. Istiqomah
8. Eat healthy and do exercises

1. BEING GRATEFUL TO ALLAH

And He gave you of all that you asked for, and if you count the Blessings of Allah, never will you be able to count them. Verily! Man is indeed an extreme wrong-doer, - a disbeliever (an extreme ingrate, denies Allah's Blessings by disbelief, and by worshipping others besides Allah, and by disobeying Allah and His Prophet Muhammad SallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam). 14: 34

We have to be grateful to Allah for:

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- i. All the good things He had provided for us
- ii. The things which happened that appears NOT to be in our favour.

On the authority of Suhaib (may Allaah be pleased with him) he said: The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said:

“Amazing is the affair of the believer, verily all of his affair is good and this is not for no one except the believer. If something of good/happiness befalls him he is grateful and that

is good for him. If something of harm befalls him he is patient and that is good for him"
(Saheeh Muslim #2999)

From this we understand that the state of affairs for the believer changes in the life of this world. Shaykhul Islaam ibn Qayyim al-Jawzeeyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) said regarding the state of affairs for the believer:

"One of them is the state of (receiving a) blessing. It's obligatory upon him (the believer) in this state (to display) the gratitude.

The second: is the state (of being) tested. It is obligatory upon him (the believer) in this state (to observe) the patience.

The third: is the state (of committing) a sin. It is obligatory upon him (the believer) in this state to seek the forgiveness from it (the sin).

The servant does not go outside of the fluctuation between these three states.

One of them is either a blessing or a virtue from Allaah of good health, wealth, a child to other than that.

It is obligatory upon him that he thanks Allaah for this bounty. Let the servant contemplate over the statement of Allaah:

"Work you, O family of Dâwud (David), with thanks!" But few of My slaves are grateful." (surah Sabaa 34: 13)

So how many of those whom Allaah has favored them:

"And if you would count the favours of Allâh, never could you be able to count them. Truly! Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (surah an-Nahl 16: 18)

How many show thanks to Allaah for these favours? Less than a few!

Or there is a (state of being) tested.

It is obligatory upon him in this state (to observe) the patience. Meaning that Allaah from His overwhelming wisdom He could test the believing servant from the different types of test. It's obligatory upon him to (observe) the patience because this is from the belief in the divine decree and from submitting the the decree of Allaah. Also (the servant must know) that what has befalling him was never going to pass him by. All of that is written in the book of Allaah (al-Lawhul-Mahfooth). Verily Allah doesn't test him (the servant) to destroy him. He only test him in order to test his patience and servitude. Verily there is for Allaah upon the servant servitude in times of hardship just as there is for Him (Allaah) upon the servant servitude in times of happiness. There also is for Him (Allaah) upon the servant servitude in that which he (the servant) dislikes just as there is for Him (Allaah) upon the servant servitude in that which he (the

servant) loves. Most of the creation give the servitude in that which they love. However the matter is giving the servitude in that which there is his hardship. The other state is (a state of) sin.

It is obligatory upon him (the servant) in this state to seek the forgiveness this is clear with regards to the obligation of turning to Allaah (repentance) displaying ones need for him."

Regarding surah ar Rahman, the verse which is always repeated is:

Then which of the Blessings of your Lord will you both (jinns and men) deny?

Abu `Isa At-Tirmidhi recorded that Jabir said, "The Messenger of Allah went to his Companions and recited Surat Ar-Rahman from beginning to end for them, but they did not say anything. The Prophet Sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam said,

«لَقَدْ قَرَأْتُهَا عَلَى الْجِنِّ لَيْلَةَ الْجِنِّ فَكَانُوا أَحْسَنَ مَرْدُودًا مِنْكُمْ، كُنْتُ
كُلَّمَا أَتَيْتُ عَلَى قَوْلِهِ:

﴿فَبِأَيِّ آءِالَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ كَاذِبُونَ﴾

قَالُوا: لَا بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ نِعْمِكَ رَبَّنَا نَكْذِبُ فَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ»

(I recited it to the Jinns, on the night of the Jinns and their response was better than yours! Whenever I recited Allah's statement: (Then which of the blessings of your Lord will you both deny)(They said, "None of Your favors do we deny, our Lord! All praise is due to you.") At-Tirmidhi recorded it and he said, "This Hadith is Gharib." Al-Hafiz Abu Bakr Al-Bazzar also collected this Hadith. Abu Ja`far Ibn Jarir recorded that `Abdullah bin `Umar said that the Messenger of Allah recited Surat Ar-Rahman, or it was recited before him, and he said,

(Why do I hear the Jinn giving a better response to their Lord than you) They said, "Why is that, O Allah's Messenger" He said,

«مَا أَتَيْتُ عَلَى قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى:

﴿فَبِأَيِّ آءِالَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ﴾

إِلَّا قَالَتِ الْجِنَّ: لَا بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ نِعَمِ رَبِّنَا نُكْذِبُ»

(Whenever I recited the statement of Allah the Exalted, (Then which of the blessings of your Lord will you both deny)(The Jinn responded by saying, "None of the favors of our Lord do we deny.")" Al-Hafiz Al-Bazzar also collected this Hadith.

How to make ourselves be more grateful to Allah and His Blessings?

i. Du'a

اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ، وَشُكْرِكَ، وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

"*Allahumma A-inni 'Ala Dzikrika Wa Syukrika Wa Husni Ibadatik*"

O Allah, assist me in remembering You, in thanking You, and in worshipping You in the best of manners. [Abu Daud, Tirmizi and An Nasai – sahih]

"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

ii. Obeying Allah and striving to please Him

iii. Prevent yourself from disobeying Him

iv. Follow the correct sunnah (3: 31) Say (O Muhammad ﷺ to mankind): "If you (really) love Allah then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you of your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

- v. Sujud shukr
- vi. Repent to Allah often

Anas bin Malik (radi Allahu anhu) narrated that The Messenger of Allah (sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "Verily, Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His slave than a person who lost his camel in a desert land and then finds it (unexpectedly)"

[Sahih al-Bukhari and Muslim]

2. AL MUHASABAH

Ramadan will come and go very fast, and if we are not rigorous on our efforts, it will pass by without us realising it, and we will regret.

1. WHAT IS AL-MUHASABAH?

AL-MUHASABAH is taking account of one's own actions. It is when an individual pauses at the end of each day that has passed, in order to check himself and run through his achievements:

1. What has he done in the course of the day?
2. Why has he done it?
3. What has he omitted?
4. Why has he omitted it?

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

I. Allah will call us into account on the Day of Judgment

It is very important to have the understanding that all of us, individually and collectively, will be under scrutiny and will have to face a day of Reckoning. We must not be like the hypocrites who do not learn lessons or take heed from calamities that befall them.

A. Surah Al Maidah 5: 105

"O, you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility upon] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided. To Allah is your return all together; and He will inform you of what you used to do"

B. Surah Al-Haqqah 69: 18

"That Day shall you be brought to Judgement, not a secret of you will be hidden."

C. Surah Al-Hashr 59: 18

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is all-Aware of what you do."

The great Caliph `Umar bin Al-Khattab (r.a.) said:

"Call yourself to account before you are called to account."

II. In order to reach the level of Taqwa

The believer will never reach the level of Taqwa without making Muhasabah. This is the secret of success and the path to salvation. Muhasabah will lead to repentance and that will lead to Taqwa. The Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

"The intelligent person takes account of himself and acts for (that which will benefit after) death." (At-Tirmidhi)

And Taqwa (consciousness and fear of Allah, piety and righteousness) is important because:

Surah al Hujurat 49: 13

"...The most honourable one of you in the sight of Allah is the one with the most Taqwa"

3. HOW TO PRACTISE AL MUHASABAH

I. One must have the following (inshaAllah)

- i. The light of wisdom- The light which Allah (SWT) has enlightened the hearts.
- ii. The ability to discern/recognise that whatever Allah (SWT) has provided for us can be both a blessing AND a trial.
- iii. Feeling of constant suspicion of oneself so that one will inspect oneself thoroughly

II. Constantly recognising and reminding oneself that shaytan is the enemy

A. Surah al Fatir 35: 6

"Certainly shaytan is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy"

B. Surah an Nur 24: 21

"O, you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of shaytan. And whoever follows the footsteps of shaytan- indeed he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing."

III. Constantly correcting one's intention in relation to acts of worship and good deeds

"ACTIONS ARE BUT BY INTENTIONS AND EVERY MAN SHALL HAVE BUT THAT WHICH HE INTENDED. THUS HE WHOSE MIGRATION WAS FOR ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER, HIS MIGRATION WAS FOR ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER, AND HE WHOSE MIGRATION WAS TO ACHIEVE SOME WORLDLY BENEFIT OR TO TAKE SOME WOMAN IN MARRIAGE, HIS MIGRATION WAS FOR THAT FOR WHICH HE MIGRATED."

Narrated by al Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, At Tarmidhi, An Nasaie

Take note that II and III are closely related! Beware therefore of the 'disease' of showing off- the hidden shirk in which Rasulullah (SAW) described as *"more hidden than the creeping of ants."* [Narrated by Ahmad & al Hakim]

Also in the hadeeth narrated by Muslim, at Tarmidhi & An Nasaie where the matyr, qari (reciter of the Quran) & giver of charity will be dragged to the hell fire.

IV. Constantly ensuring that the deeds or acts of worship are done CORRECTLY, ONLY according to the Quran and sunnah.

V. Performing more voluntary acts of worship or deeds, example the sunnah prayers

4. WHEN TO PRACTISE AL MUHASABA

Every evening before one sleeps, or at the most, once a week.

Take note:

- i. The obligatory duties, especially the obligatory prayers (did we do it on time? In full concentration? in congregation?)

- ii. voluntary acts of worship, eg the sunnah prayers(did we do the 12 raka'at voluntary prayers)
- iii. Have we done enough dhikr? (Remembrance of Allah)
- iv. Have we asked forgiveness from Allah?
- v. Have we read the Quran?
- vi. Are we going to learn any new verses of the Quran?
- vii. Shall we do voluntary fast?
- viii. Have we attended any religious talks to increase our knowledge?
- ix. Have we make any donations to charity...help the poor,etc

RIGOROUSLY KEEP ALL THESE INTO ACCOUNT!

InshaAllah with full sincerity to improve ourselves, we would be able to reach the level of TAQWA that would make us honourable in the eyes of Allah (SWT)

"Our Lord, verily it is You Who will gather mankind together on the Day about which there is no doubt. Verily Allah never breaks His promise."

[SURAH AL 'IMRAN 3:9]

3. SEEKING FORGIVENESS FROM OTHERS

Do remember that many of us will have problems on this issue on the Day of Judgment, where we have infringed the rights of others. Allah can forgive your sins against Him inshaAllah, but He cannot forgive your sins against others. This includes backbiting, stealing things from others, borrowing from others, debt, etc.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: According to the saheeh hadeeth (authentic narration): "Whoever has wronged his brother with regard to his blood, his wealth or his honour, let him come and set matters straight before there comes a Day on which there will be no dirhams and no dinars, only good deeds and bad deeds, and if he has good deeds (they will be taken and given to the one whom he wronged), otherwise some of the bad deeds of the one whom he wronged will be taken and added to his burden, then he will be thrown into the Fire." This has to do with cases where the one who was wronged was aware of it; but if he was gossiped about or slandered and he does not know, then it was said that one of the conditions of repentance is telling him, or it was said that this is not essential, which is the view of the majority; both views were narrated from Ahmad, but his view on such matters is that one should do good deeds for the one who was wronged, such as praying for him, praying for forgiveness for him and doing good deeds to be given to him, to take the place of that backbiting and slander. Al-Hasan al-Basri said: The expiation for

gossip is to pray for forgiveness for the person about whom you gossiped. End quote.

Muslim narrated from 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The martyr will be forgiven for all his sins except debt."

Al-Nawawi said in Sharh Muslim:

The words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) "except debt" draw attention to all rights owed to other people. Jihad (fighting for Allah's cause), martyrdom and other righteous deeds do not expiate for transgressions against the rights of other people, rather they only expiate for transgressions against the rights of Allah. End quote.

The month of Ramadan is the time for us to seek forgiveness NOT ONLY FROM ALLAH, but also from others whom we may have wronged. Also, remember the hadith about the bankrupt person in Islam:

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "**Do you know who is bankrupt?**" They said, "The one without money or goods is bankrupt." The Prophet said, "**Verily, the bankrupt of my nation are those who come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers, fasting, and charity, but also with insults, slander, consuming wealth, shedding blood, and beating others. The oppressed will each be given from his good deeds. If his good deeds run out before justice is fulfilled, then their sins will be cast upon him and he will be thrown into the Hellfire.**"

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2581

Grade: *Sahih* (authentic) according to Muslim

STEPS TO TAKE TO SEEK FORGIVENESS FROM THOSE WHOM YOU HAVE WRONGED

1. If you have wronged or oppressed the person, you should **turn to Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala to ask for forgiveness.**

"Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous. Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men, for Allah loves those who do good." (3:133-134)

2. **Push aside your ego;** we have to remove any pride in order to humble ourselves to genuinely apologise. This shows that you value your relationship.

Even if you don't think you're in the wrong, apologise and be kind for the sake of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala.

3. Be quick to apologise.

"It is not lawful for a Muslim to desert (stop talking to) his brother beyond three nights, the one turning one way and the other turning to the other way when they meet, the better of the two is one who is the first to greet the other."
[Bukhari]

4. Admit to your shortcomings and take responsibility. Don't sound insincere or cold. Muttering "I apologise" or a stern "sorry..." under your breath isn't very genuine; be sincere and mean what you say - 'I'm so sorry, [insert person's name]' sounds better, doesn't it?

5. If the situation calls for it, talk it out and explain what happened. Try to **restore their trust** and confidence in you.

6. **Show you care** by asking the other person what could be done to amend it.

7. Learn a lesson from this incident. Set your morals and correct your behaviour. Our interactions with people are also a part of our deen, and our character will weigh heavily on the Day of Judgment. It is reported that Muadh ibn Jabal said, "The last advice the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave me when I put my foot in the stirrup was that he said, 'Make your character good for the people, Muadh ibn Jabal!'"

"Fear Allah wherever you may be; follow up an evil deed with a good one which will wipe (the former) out, and behave good-naturedly towards people." [At-Tirmidhi]

Taking responsibility for our wrongdoings and/or mistakes is a sign of strength, humility, and wisdom - and at the end of the day, it's just the basics of good manners, which are what every ProductiveMuslim should strive for.

4. TADABBUR

Tadabbur, means pondering over the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an and contemplating them. Literally, it means to look into the consequence or the end result of the matters, e. g. if we did that what would happen to us.

“Have they not pondered over the Word (of Allah i.e. what is sent down to the Prophet(Salla-Allaahu alaihi wa sallam)).”

5. CRYING, ESPECIALLY ALONE

A. TYPES OF CRYING

Imaam Ibn Al-Qayyim stated that crying has ten types that happen due to:

1. Fear
2. Heart softness and mercy
3. Love and longing
4. Joy and happiness
5. Fear of pain which one can not bear
6. Sadness; this one differs from the one due to fear, is that the former (sadness) results from bad thing or missing out on something that one loves, both of which took place in the past. The later (fear) is from things expected in the future. Furthermore, the difference between crying due to joy and that due to sadness is that the tears of joy are tears with coolness to the heart while the tears due to sadness are hot and the heart is grieved. This is why it is said to the thing that brings joy; “Delight (or coolness) to the eye” and to the thing that brings sorrow; “heat to the eye” meaning Allaah caused a burning in the heart as a result of which
7. Weakness and being feeble
8. Hypocrisy
9. Being hired to do. This is like the cases when people used to hire some ladies to cry in certain events. ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab said about such people: “They sell their tears and cry for the affliction of others”
10. Imitating others; this like when a person sees others cry and starts crying with them not knowing why they are crying.

B. FROM THE QUR’AN

Allaah praised those who weep out of fear from Him:

“Say, “Believe in it or do not believe. Indeed, those who were given knowledge before it (i.e. the righteous among the People of the Scriptures who recognize the truth contained in the Quran.) when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration. And they say, “Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled.” And they fall upon their faces weeping, and it [i.e. the Quran] increases them in humble submission.” [Quran: 17: 107-109].

Man can not help stopping himself from crying because he was created with it as Allaah Says (what means):

"And that it is He who makes [one] laugh and weep" [Quran: 53: 43].

When commenting on this verse, Imaam Al-Qurtubi said: "Allaah decreed the causes for crying and laughter" Imaam 'Ataa' said: "Allaah decreed joy and sadness, because joy results in laughter and sadness leads to crying".

The joy on finding the truth, on realizing His infinite mercy and in surat Al-Maidah He (swt) says

"You see their eyes overflow with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth." (5:83)

C. FROM THE HADEETH

The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said,

Abu Umamah Sudaiy bin `Ajlan Al-Bahili (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Nothing is dearer to Allah than two drops and two marks: A drop of tears shed out of fear of Allah and a drop of blood shed in Allah's way. Regarding the two marks, they are: Marks left in the Cause of Allah and a mark left in observing one of the obligatory act of worship of Allah, the Exalted".

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: *This Hadith mentions the merits of the following:*

- 1. Weeping out of fear of Allah.*
- 2. The blood which flows in the way of Allah.*
- 3. The marks of injuries which are left on the bodies of those who take part in Jihad.*
- 4. The marks of wounds received in the performance of obligations.*

There are two eyes that the Fire will not touch: eyes that wept in fear of Allah, and eyes that stayed up guarding in the way of Allah. [Tirmidhi]

And he also mentioned (peace and blessings be upon him) seven people whom Allah will shade in His shade, on a Day when there is no other shade, and included among them,

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Seven people Allah will give them His Shade on the Day when there would be no shade but the Shade of His Throne (i.e., on the Day of Resurrection): And they are: a just ruler; a youth who grew up with the worship of Allah; a person whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah; a man whom an extremely beautiful woman seduces (for illicit relation), but he (rejects this offer and) says: 'I fear Allah'; a man who gives in charity and conceals it (to such an extent) that the left hand does not know what the right has given; and a man who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes become tearful". [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: *This Hadith has been included in this chapter for the reason that it highlights the merits of weeping for fear of Allah. The fear of Allah keeps one away from disobedience of Allah, the reward of which in the Hereafter is Jannah - a world which abounds in the Bounties and Pleasure of Allah.*

D. THE VIRTUES OF CRYING

There are many great virtues for crying out of fear from Allaah.

1. Allaah praised some of His prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, then explained the reason for the praise as in His saying (which means): "When the verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them, they fell in prostration and weeping." [Quran: 19: 58].
2. Allaah also says about the dwellers of Paradise (what means): "And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other. They will say, "Indeed, we were previously among our people fearful [of displeasing Allaah]. So Allaah conferred favor upon us and protected us from the punishment of the Scorching Fire. Indeed, we used to supplicate Him before. Indeed, it is He who is the Beneficent, the Merciful."" [Quran: 52: 25-28].
3. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah said: "One who weeps out of fear of Allaah, will not enter the Hell till milk returns back in the udder; and the dust raised on account of fighting in the path of Allaah and the smoke of Hell will never exist together". [At-Tirmithi].

Commentary:

1. A person who has such a fear of Allah that he weeps on account of it, cannot be disobedient to Allah. Obviously, his life will generally be spent in obedience of Allah and strict abstinence from sins. It is very true to say that it is as impossible for such a person to go to Hell as the return of milk to the udders.

2. Similarly, Jihad is a highly meritorious act for a Muslim. A Mujahid, who fights for the sake of Allah, is perfectly safe from Hell because the dust that falls on this way on him, cannot mix with the smoke of Hell.

4. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allaah said: "Seven people Allaah will give them His Shade on the Day when there would be no shade but the Shade of His Throne (i.e., on the Day of Resurrection): And they are: ... and a man who remembers Allaah in solitude and his eyes become tearful". [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim].
5. Ibn `Abbaas reported: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah saying: "Two eyes will never be touched by the fire of Hell; an eye which weeps out of Fear of Allaah and an eye which spends the night in guarding in the Cause of Allaah." [At- Tirmithi].
6. Abu Umaamah Al-Baahili reported that the Messenger of Allaah said: "Nothing is dearer to Allaah than two drops and two marks: A drop of tears shed out of fear of Allaah and a drop of blood shed in Allaah's way. Regarding the two marks, they are: Marks left in the Cause of Allaah and a mark left in observing one of the obligatory acts of worship of Allaah, the Exalted". [At- Tirmithi].
7. Our Salaf (i.e. righteous predecessors) realized the value of crying out of fear from Allaah, and this is noticed from their statements and actions. Ibn `Umar used to say: "It is dearer to me to shed one drop of tear than to give out in charity one thousand Dinaar (i.e. golden currency)". Ka'b Al-Ahbaar used to say: "It is dearer to me to cry out of fear from Allaah and my tears run on my cheek than to spend my weight in gold as charity".

6. BEING GENEROUS

Generosity is a virtuous trait that every Muslim should strive to attain. As for the believer who closely adheres to the teachings of Islam, kindness and giving from what he has become part of his good character.

Generosity is the opposite of stinginess, as stinginess is a disease of the heart. The Muslim should avoid this bad quality, for it is a source of corruption. The Muslim's faith and righteous deeds purify his heart, so his hands should be outstretched, giving to those who are in need.

A generous man will share what he has with others, thinking about other people as he thinks of himself. He benefits by helping others and solving their problems.

He makes people happy and prevents them from doing wrong, which is often a direct result of poverty. This is a great service to society, and there are some people who spend their life in this service, establishing valuable foundations which remain after them such as hospitals, libraries etc.

Whatever is given for Allah's Sake will never decrease one's wealth in the slightest; rather, it will bless, purify and increase it, as the Prophet ﷺ said: *"Charity does not decrease wealth."* [Muslim]

Whatever is given in charity will be recorded with The One Who has full knowledge of all things. Allah, Almighty, Says (what means): *"...And whatever you spend of good - it will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged."* [Quran 2: 272]

The Prophet ﷺ directed the Muslims' attention to this higher understanding of generosity when he asked 'Aaishah, may Allah be pleased with her, what was left of the sheep they had slaughtered. She told him ﷺ: 'Nothing but the shoulder.'" He ﷺ said, *'Everything except the shoulder is saved'.*" [At-Tirmithi]

Whatever is spent will return multiplied and Allah will increase it in this world and in the next. Allah Says (what means): *"The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing."* [Quran 2: 261]

And (what means): *"... But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."* [Quran 34: 39]

Since noble characteristics are acquired in different ways, the Muslim works to develop virtuous traits according to Islamic guidelines. Allah Says (what means): *"And spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you and he says, 'My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give charity and be among the righteous.'"* [Quran 63: 10]

Generosity is not expressed exclusively with wealth and money, but also with our time, good deeds, actions and kindness to all people. Allah Says (what means): *"Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love..."* [Quran 3: 92]

Allah, Almighty Says (what means): *"Indeed, mankind was created anxious: when evil touches him, impatient, and when good touches him, withholding [of it]..."* [Quran 70: 19-21]

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *"Protect yourself from the Hell-fire even by giving a piece of a date as charity."* [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

This narration shows that a person can be generous and win the pleasure of Allah even by spending a small quantity of wealth.

Jaabir, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ never said 'no' to anyone who asked him for something. [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

This narration illustrates the generosity of the Prophet ﷺ. If somebody asked him for something, he ﷺ would never say 'no' to him. He ﷺ would also, on occasions, resort to borrowing to meet the want of a needy person.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Everyday two angels descend and one of them says, `O Allah! Compensate (more) to the person who gives (in charity)'; while the other one says, `O Allah! Destroy the one who withholds (charity, etc).'" [Al-Bukhari]

The Prophet ﷺ also said: "Allah, the Exalted, Says, `Spend, O son of Aadam, you will also be spent upon.'" [Al-Bukhari & Muslim]

According to the narration, one who spends in the way of Allah, will be duly paid. It means that Allah will enhance the provision of such a man and grant him the best recompense.

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said: "There are forty kinds of virtue, the highest of which is to gift a (milch) she-goat. He who practices any of these virtues, expecting its reward (from Allah) and believing in the truth of the promise made for it, will enter Jannah (Paradise).'" [Al-Bukhari]

A person giving charity should not render it vain by reminders of his generosity or by injury. The giver should be cheerful when asked and when giving. He should spend without being stingy or irresponsible.

7. ISTIQOMAH

Verily, those who say: "Our Lord is Allah (Alone)," and then they *Istaqamu* , on them the angels will descend (at the time of their death) (saying): "Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!"
41: 30

On the authority of Abu 'Amr, though others call him Abu 'Amrah Sufyan bin 'Abdullah, *radiyallahu anhu*, who said:

I said: "O Messenger of Allah, tell me something about Islam which I could not ask anyone about save you." He answered: "Say: 'I believe in Allah', and then stand firm and steadfast."

[Muslim]

Background

The literal meaning of "Istiqamah": to go straight into the right direction, acting rightly, allowing no deviation. It is derived from the stem "Qiyyam", which implies the continuity of doing something, following up with it and making sure that it is done in the right way and there is neither deviation nor swerving.

The term has been used by the Qur'an in many verses. Allah the Almighty says:

"Therefore, stand firm (on the straight path) as you are commanded and those who turn in repentance with you. And do not transgress, for He (Allah) sees well all that you do."

[Surah Hud (11): ayat 112]

Ibnu Abbas said that this verse was the hardest and most difficult verse of the Qur'an on the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam*.

Indeed it is a difficult task to achieve Istiqamah, hence, the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam*, said; "Be straight on the path or be close to it."

In another verse, Allah the Almighty says:

"So unto this (religion) invite (the people). Stand steadfast as you are commanded and do not follow their desires....."

[Surah al-Shura' (42): ayat 15]

Based on these two verses, it can be inferred that Istiqamah is to stand firm and steadfast to what we have been commanded by Allah, i.e. to fulfill obligations and to avoid prohibitions. Also, we should not allow ourselves to follow or be misled by desires (whether it is our desires or the desires of others) as it will cause deviation and lead us astray.

Lessons

According to Ibn al-Qayyim, there are five conditions to achieve Istiqamah in performing required deeds:

1. The act should be done for the sake of Allah alone (*ikhlas*).
2. It should be done on the basis of knowledge (*'ilm*).

3. Performing *ibadah* should be in the same manner that they have been commanded.
4. To do it in the best way possible.
5. Restricting oneself to what is lawful while performing those deeds.

According to other scholars of *suluk*, i.e. behavior, there are certain steps to be followed in order to achieve Istiqamah :

1. Always being aware of the final destination, i.e. the Day of Judgment (Aakhirah). And to use this awareness in a positive way as a motive to do good deeds. One way to do it is through remembering that a person's journey towards Akhirah starts the minute he / she passes away and leaves this world. One of the Salafs said: "If you live until the morning do not wait for the evening and if you live until the evening do not wait for the morning."
2. Commitment (Musharatah). One has to make a commitment that he/she will be steadfast and will do things in the right way and in the best way possible, and to adhere to conjunctions of Islam. Unfortunately many Muslims are being lenient in making such a commitment.
3. To make continuous efforts (Mujahadah) to bring that commitment to reality. Some Muslims dare to make the commitment, but dare not to make the effort to make the commitment a reality.
4. Continuous checking and reviewing of one's deeds (Muraqabah). Being honest with oneself so as not to give false excuses for failing to fulfill a commitment.
5. Self accountability (Muhasabah). This should be done twice: Firstly, before we start doing something, ensuring that it pleases Allah, that we do it for His sake only, realizing the right way it should be done. Secondly, after the action has been done, to check whether we have achieved what we aimed for, and to check for defects and shortcomings, and that we still could have done it better by not being satisfied with our action.
6. Blaming oneself for not doing it perfectly after it has been done. Self blaming here is a positive one by using it as a motive, and by aiming for improvement and having the intention of doing things better next time. This leads to making another commitment and continual commitments to improve our performance.
7. Striving for improvement (Tahsin). We have to make improvements in all that we do (daily activities, work, actions, good deeds, *ibadah*, etc.) as one of our objectives.
8. To be humble towards Allah, realizing that no one is perfect except Him, seeking His forgiveness, guidance and support.

It should be emphasized that these steps/conditions apply to worldly matters as well as *ibadah* and good religious deeds.

Factors that lead to the weakening of Istiqamah include:

1. Committing sins (*ma'siah*), insisting on repeating them again and again, without *istighfar* (seeking Allah's forgiveness) and without practicing repentance.
2. Shirk (associating anything with Allah) whether in intentions, by showing off our good deeds to others, seeking others' appraisal, avoiding being blamed by others, being afraid of someone, or to seek rewards from others than Allah. This part of shirk is also called *riyya'* or showing off. All these lead to deviation in Istiqamah, and when these stimuli are not there, the person's work is not perfect any more and it is not done in the best way possible.
3. Nifaq (hypocrisy). There are two forms of *nifaq*: in belief and in action. The Muslim who surrenders totally to the will of Allah and accept Islam based on his/her choice is free from the first form of hypocrisy. However any Muslim is subject to and should avoid the second form of *nifaq* which the Prophet, *sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam*, warned us about: Not keeping promises and breaking them continuously without good reasons or excuses, not fulfilling commitments we make with others, being aggressive and unjust to others in quarrels, and disputes, failing to shoulder responsibilities/burdens we are entrusted with, etc. All these bad qualities should be avoided since they lead to the weakening of our Istiqamah.
4. Bida'ah (innovations in *ibadah*), whether genuine *bida'ah* (performing *ibadah* which has not been ascribed by Shariah, i.e. revelation), or relative *bida'ah* (failing to observe the requirements of doing *ibadah* – the five criteria discussed in Hadith 5), will lead to decreasing the quality of good action or *ibadah*.

There are other factors that also contribute to the weakening of Istiqamah, such as gff enjoyment, and being misled by self interests and desires.

Applying the above mentioned steps and requirements pinpointed by scholars will help in overcoming all these obstacles and barriers.

8. EAT HEALTHY AND DO EXERCISES

i. Exercises

The Prophet ﷺ said: "The strong believer is better than the weak believer." (Sahih Muslim)

While some scholars have said that this hadith refers to spiritual strength only, other scholars have mentioned that this refers to physical strength as well. Imam Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him), for instance, says that this strength refers to the one which allows a person to carry out the Commands of Allah Most High. Consequently, physical strength is also included in the definition of this strength as one certainly requires physical strength for carrying out many acts of worship such as the Hajj or the fasting of Ramadan.

Furthermore, physical fitness is also a means for enabling us to increase our performance of good deeds. Several studies show a correlation between exercise and life expectancy, revealing that 2.5 hours of moderate exercise a week increases life expectancy by around 3.4 years! The longer we live, the more opportunities we have to work for our *akhirah* through the performance of good deeds.

ii. Healthy diet

The Prophet ﷺ laid out the golden principle in regards to controlling our diet in the following hadith: “The worst vessel a person can fill is his stomach. A few morsels which can keep a person’s back straight are sufficient. If a person has a need, then they should fill one third of their stomach with food, one third with liquids, and leave one third for breathing.” (Tirmidhi)

What is simply understood from this is that one should not overeat i.e. eat more than one’s fill. This allows a person to avoid many of the diseases and ailments associated with an uncontrolled diet allowing one to live a healthy life and in turn have more energy for engaging in physical activities.

iii. Looking at practices of our beloved prophet SallAllahu ‘alayhi wa sallam

There are many incidents which occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, along with some of his regular practices, which demonstrate to us the extent of his physical fitness.

Following is a motivational glimpse into the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ:

(1) Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates: “I did not see anyone more handsome than Allah’s Messenger ﷺ. It was as if the sun was shining on his face. I did not see anyone walking faster than Allah’s Messenger ﷺ. It was as if the earth shifted closer when he would walk. We would exert ourselves [to keep up with him] and he would continue effortlessly.” (Tirmidhi)

It's worth mentioning here that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) himself arrived in Madinah during the latter period of the life of the Prophet ﷺ which proves that the Prophet ﷺ was extremely fit even at the age of around fifty seven.

(2) A few of the many long journeys undertaken by the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime are a testament to his physical fitness. Some of these are as follows:

Journey to Ta'if: In order to invite the people of Ta'if to Islam, the Prophet ﷺ journeyed from Makkah to the city, which is a distance of approximately seventy miles from Makkah. He travelled a total of one hundred and forty miles there and back in the sweltering heat of Arabia.

Regular trips to Jabal Nur: Near the age of forty, the Prophet ﷺ would set off from Makkah to Jabal Nur which was a distance of five miles. The Prophet ﷺ would then climb this mountain which requires further exertion, again, demonstrating the physical fitness of the Prophet ﷺ.

Walks to Masjid Quba: Another regular practice of the Prophet ﷺ was that every Saturday he would walk to Masjid Quba which is around 2.5 miles in distance from Madinah. This was a weekly habit of the Prophet ﷺ showing us that every week he ﷺ was walking for at least five miles.