

"Until they change themselves"... Introduction

In the Name of Allah

Asalamualaykum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatu,

The current situation of the Muslim Ummah does not require an introduction, we all see and hear day in and day out what is happening. One must realize that it's not just about Iraq, for Iraq is a symptom of a large-scale failure in our Ummah. Other symptoms like Palestine, Chechnya, illiteracy, ignorance, disease, overall weakness and humiliation all point to the fact that we are in big trouble. Many of us are realizing the scale of our problem and feel the urge to make a change. Many sincere Muslims have vowed to do anything it takes to get our Ummah out of this situation. Many Muslims have reflected on themselves and started to develop their selves in the right direction and are drawing closer to Allah but many of us feel that there must be something else to do. Many Muslims have an enormous amount of energy they want to turn into results but they don't know what to do. Sometimes this leads to frustration, and other times to depression. Some Muslims are complaining that its not enough of use loose terms like "returning back to Allah" or "maintaining Taqwa and Allah will bring us victory" and are demanding more specific things to do. Others are tranquilizing themselves by believing that this misery will certainly lead to the appearance of "*Al-Mahdi*" or "The Guided One" that will lead us to victory. We want to change and we are trying to, and many of us are already changing, but our Ummah is still in the mud.... **Are we forgetting something?**

When Allah created the universe, He decreed Divine Laws that organize all creation. Therefore, water will continue to boil at 100°C on our planet, and what ever goes up will always come down again (law of gravity). Aside from the Divine Laws that control nature (Physics), there is a whole other set of Laws that control societies and civilizations. If we Muslims want to rise as an Ummah, we must follow these Laws because there is no other way. We must learn these rules and take them into consideration and act according to them.

Amr Khaled, an Egyptian Preacher, started a series of daily episodes during the war on Iraq that presented practical solutions to change the status of our Ummah. He drew a step-by-step guide that takes into consideration the Divine Laws that control the rise and fall of civilizations so that we could implement them and therefore rise as an Ummah. Allah has made a promise that if we do certain things, we will rise, and if we do other things we will fall, and Allah does not break His promises. The series was titled "**Until they change themselves**", and was inspired by the Divine Law in the verse "**Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves**" (13:11).

Each series addressed something we are not doing that we should do, or something wrong in us that we need to change. These things are practical day-to-day behaviors that if corrected by Muslims, will lead to their rise. So if you are looking for something practical to follow, this series might help you.

It may be dark, but the sun is about to rise. The question isn't "Will Islam rise again?" because it certainly will, its Allah's religion, He takes care of it. The question is...

"Will you be part of it"??!!

May Allah guide us to the best of actions.

Step 1: Humility & Humbleness in front of Allah (Tadaru')

Law Number One: [We must always humble ourselves towards Allah](#)

Tadaru' is a term that means exaggerated humility and humbleness caused by despair and is expressed when a person reached his final resort. Imam Ahmed ibn Hambal explained it saying, "Imagine a man drowning in the middle of the sea and all he has is a piece of wood that he is clinging onto. He is getting weaker and weaker and the salty waves are pulling him closer to death. Imagine him with his eager eyes looking desperately at the sky crying out loud 'O Lord, O Lord!!!' Imagine how desperate he is and how sincere he is asking for Allah's help. That is *tadaru'* in front of Allah".

Allah teaches us in the Quran that *tadaru'* is a form of worship a believer uses during emergencies and crises. It requires a person to remove the veils of arrogance and ego covering his or her heart. It implies sincere begging to the Lord of the Worlds. It demonstrates that a person has realized how weak he is and how Powerful our Lord is. Sometimes when Allah sees that His servants are becoming distracted with this worldly life and have strayed from the Straight Path, He puts them in a severe situation so that they realize their weakness and run back to Allah for protection. Therefore calamities falling upon Muslims are to make them wake up and turn back to Allah. We must be intelligent enough to understand these messages and act according to them.

Allah The Almighty says, ***"Verily, We sent (Messengers) to many nations before you (O Muhammad). And we seized them with extreme poverty (or loss in wealth) and loss in health (with calamities) so that they might humble themselves (believe with humility)." (6:42)***. This verse shows that Allah uses calamities as a routine method to wake people up and encourage them to run to Him for protection. It is as if a calamity is a bitter medicine for us to become better believers. Allah does this for our benefit, because ***we need*** to maintain a close relationship with Him. Allah expresses our need for this form medicine in the following verse, ***"And if We had mercy on them and removed the distress which is on them, still they would obstinately persist in their transgression, wandering blindly."*** (23:75).

In another verse Allah says, ***"When Our Torment reached them, why then did they not humble themselves (believe with humility)? But their hearts became hardened, and Shaytan (Satan) made what they used to do seem fair and correct"*** (6:43). We must not make this mistake and close our eyes and hearts in front of Allah's call to **humbleness** and **humility** to Him. We must not let Shaytan trick us into believing that our problems have nothing to do with our relation with Allah.

Allah says, ***"Say (O Muhammad) 'Who rescues you from the darkness of the land and the sea (dangers like storms), (when) you call upon Him in humility and in secret (saying): If He (Allah) only saves us from this (danger), we shall truly be grateful.' Say (O Muhammad): 'Allah rescues you from this and from all (other) distresses, and yet you worship others besides Allah.'" (6:63-64)***. No one will rescue us from the darkness we Muslims are in today except Allah, but first, we must call upon Him in **humility**.

How to achieve *tadaru'*:

It is necessary to realize the grave calamity that is falling upon us. Our children are being pounded by missiles that are weighed in tons, our brothers and sisters are being oppressed and tortured all over the world. It is not so distant back in time that tens of thousands of our sisters were raped in the Balkans and until this day our brothers are falling in Palestine with Israeli bullets. Our homes are being demolished and our dignity is being stepped on ever day. Its not just about Iraq, and believe it or not, its not just about our Muslim Ummah, Its about our whole planet. Our world is heading straight towards a cliff and its not

slowing down. If you think you are far from the danger, you are wrong. If you think you could ignore it, dream on! The destruction will reach you and your children. If your children or friends are not killed in another war, they will die by an over dose or hit by drunken driver. Things will only get worse for everyone. We are drowning, and no one can help us except Allah. If you can't realize the severe situation, then you have an additional problem, read verse (6:43) above. **We need** Allah's help and protection!

When the whale swallowed Prophet Yunus (Jonah) after he was thrown off the boat, he was in a terrifying situation. Imagine yourself for a second being locked up in a small closet, its dark, and there is no hope of getting out. Now imagine yourself in a whale's stomach, imagine the darkness, and the difficulty in breathing. The whale is in the storming sea and its night. Imagine how Prophet Yunus felt, and imagine how he was when he prayed to Allah in **humility** saying, **"None has the right to be worshipped but You (O Allah)! Glorified (and Exalted) be You!! Truly, I have been of the wrong doers!" (21:87)**. Imagine a Prophet, a role model for human beings, saying that and referring to himself as a wrong doer, then imagine how you should beg Allah.

The night before the battle of Badr, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) saw how the army of the Pagans had out-numbered them and was so well equipped. Then he looked at the Muslim army and how few they were with poor weaponry. Badr was the first military confrontation between the Muslims and the Non-believers. It was a critical event in the history of Islam. If the Muslims lost this battle, Islam would have disappeared forever. Realizing this, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) started to pray to Allah in **humility** and **humbleness**. He raised his hands up high, stretching his arms to the extent that his armpits appeared. He engaged in sincere supplication to Allah and his body was shaking causing his cloak to fall off his back. He was begging Allah crying, **"O Ever Living!! O Sustainer and Protector!! I beg You for Your mercy!!! O Allah!! I am waiting for Your victory which You have promised me. I beseech You Allah to defeat them (the enemies)."**

This is the level of **humility** we should try to reach when praying to Allah to help our Ummah. Lets try to practice this form of worship this whole week. Lets beg Allah for His help as if we are really drowning and there is no one there to rescue us except Him. Lets get up in the middle of the night to pray *keyam layl* (night prayer), and lets break down in front of Allah begging Him, as we have never done before. Lets gather each other and do it together. Lets pray to Allah in **humility** in groups. Lets cry to Him together, lets run to Him with our families and friends. Lets all beg him for His help and protection.

Tadaru'... that's the first thing we should go back to. We need to achieve **tadaru'** so that Allah may change our situation, because...

"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves"

Step 2: Unity. We are One Community (Ummah)

Law Number Two: [Unity. We are ONE Community](#)

One of the main factors that lead to the rise of this Ummah is its [unity](#) and that's why Islam has organized our lives in a way that maintains this [unity](#) and develops it. This is a Divine Law "If you are united, you will become powerful". The non-Muslims discovered this Divine Law and they have applied it, which in turn lead to their rise and power. Look around you and read the names: The European **Union**, The **United** Kingdom, The **United** States of America, Euro, Shengen (Europe-wide traveling visa) etc. They have applied the Law of [Unity](#). But because they have neglected other Divine Laws, like faith in Allah for example, their power is only temporary, and they are already overwhelmed with different internal problems and weaknesses. You must apply the whole system, the whole matrix of Divine Laws, and only then will you be able to lead the whole world to prosperity, security, and happiness.

[Unity](#) is demonstrated in Islam at four different levels:

1- The level of the **Ummah**:

Wake up Muslims!! We are ONE Ummah, and we worship ONE GOD. It doesn't matter if your father is from China or if you mother is from Jamaica, we are one body, one entity, ONE Ummah! Allah the Almighty says: *"Verily, this community of yours is a single community, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other)" (21:92).*

2- The level of the **Country**:

Love for one's country does not contradict with one's loyalty to the Ummah or to one's Faith in Allah. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) demonstrated this form of bonding when he was migrating from Mecca to Medina. With Mecca now behind him, he looked back and said, "Oh Mecca, how much I love you, and if your people did not drive me out of you, I would have never lived in any other place."

3- The level of the **Neighborhood**:

Neighborhood ties are very important in Islam, to the extent that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Jibreel kept on telling me to take care of my neighbors and strengthen my relationship with them until I thought that they would inherit me."

4- The level of the **Family**:

The importance of uterine relationships (*Silat Al-Arham*) and family ties are constantly referred to in the Quran, and they form a small-scale level of domestic [unity](#).

Now what have we done with these levels of [unity](#)? First it started with drifting away from the sense of [unity](#) with the rest of our Ummah. How many of us actually feel the bond that is supposed to exist with our brothers and sisters in Western China or in Turkey. How many of us even think of them? Ask your friends how they feel about the Ummah. How many of them will ask you "What? Ummah? What is that supposed to mean?" We have destroyed the first level of our [unity](#) and therefore we started to drift away from each other. Then comes the sense of belonging to one's country. How many of us actually feel that they love their countries (of course aside from supporting it during international sport events)? How many of us have feelings of patriotism? Many of us have no idea about these feelings. How many Muslims when living in a foreign country try to avoid contact with their brothers from the same country fearing that they might be a burden on him. There goes the second level of [unity](#).

Look at our neighborhoods, how many neighbors living in your building do you know by name? How is your relationship with them? Is there mutual care and trust or is there isolation and avoidance? O Muslims have you forgotten how important your relationship with your neighbor is in Islam? We have even lost our third level of [unity](#). Sadly, the final level of [unity](#) in Islam was not in a better case than those mentioned before. Look at our families, how many of us actually sit with their parents and talk with them and benefit from their

experiences? How many of us feel eager to be with their parents? How is your family? How often do you get together? If you live away from them, how often do you call? Is your family really still united? You know, that was our last level of **unity** we just lost.

O Muslims, what then do you expect??? We did not obey the Divine Law! We lost every single level of **unity** and therefore there was no escape from the result, a terrible decline in all aspects of society. We need to build those bridges once again. We have to **unite** again on each of these four levels! Enough selfishness because its killing us! Enough thinking only about yourself because its suicide! **Wake Up Muslims! We Are ONE Body! ONE Ummah! We Need Each Other!!**

How Islam promotes **Unity**:

All Islamic rituals help maintain and develop **unity** amongst Muslims. We pray five times a day, preferably in congregation so that everyone living on the same street, working in the same place, or studying at the same school could get together in a straight line and pray to their Lord. Then there is a weekly gathering for the whole neighborhood during the Friday Prayer (*Jumuah*), this helps maintain the neighborhood's **unity**. Another larger scale of **unity** maintenance and development is during the month of Ramadan. All Muslims around the world spend the same month fasting. In a single city they cease from eating and start eating at the same time. This is another form of **unity**. And of course, there is the Pilgrimage (Hajj), the manifestation of Muslim **unity**. Muslims from all around the globe come to same place, wearing the same clothes, worshiping the same God, repeating the same sentence, walking in the same direction at the same time, having the same goal, and getting the same reward. It's **unity** at its highest levels. See how Islam helps us maintain and develop our **unity**? And see how separated we are today?

During the Battle of the Trench, the Muslims were racing against time trying to finish digging a trench that would prevent the entry of some 10,000 Pagans into Medina in order to fight them. The Muslims were experiencing great hunger so they used to put a rock in a cloth and tie it around their abdomen so that the rock would press against their stomach and give it a sense of fullness. On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was tying two rocks against his stomach. When Jaber ibn Abdullah (rAa) saw this he ran to his wife and asked her what food they had. She replied saying that all they had was one chicken and some bread. So Jaber went to the Prophet and secretly invited him alone to his house for some food. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) looked at him and asked, "**Alone Jaber? You want me to come to your house and eat alone?**" So Jaber replied saying that there was only a very little amount of food, but the Messenger of Allah only repeated, "**Alone Jaber? Alone? I was never to eat alone when the rest of the Believers are hungry.**" This is how the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) felt towards the rest of the community. They were one body. This feeling of **unity** and care about his people is also manifested in his constant plead to Allah. He would cry, "**O Allah, my Ummah, my Ummah.**" He constantly asked Allah to mercy us. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) wasn't living for himself, he was living for us also, and for all of humanity.

All immigrations throughout history lead to tensions that most of the times turned violent between the native inhabitants and the immigrants. This is clearly demonstrated between the Europeans and the Native Americans in North America, the Turks and the Germans in Germany, as well as many other examples. The only immigration that was totally peaceful was the one the Muslims of Mecca made to Medina. A Muslim from Medina would take his brother coming from Mecca into his house and literally split the house into two by building a wall in the middle. He would give the immigrant, willingly, half of his wealth and possessions. Can you imagine the extent of **unity** that these people were experiencing? That's how we should try to be, enough selfishness, enough living just for yourself. Make a promise today; "I won't live for myself anymore. I belong to this Ummah and I will live for it!" Do you want to practice that? Do you want to start building those bridges of **unity**? Go home, hug and kiss your parents, or pick up the phone and call them. Ask Allah to flourish your family ties and bless you with mercy amongst one another. Invite your neighbors over and rebuild those bridges! We got lots of work to do, but at least we have a clear path ahead of us. **We're learning the Divine Laws that control the rise of our Ummah, so lets apply them!!**

Step 3: Abandoning Disobedience

Law Number Three: [Sins destroy our Ummah](#)

We all commit sins, but we have to start being more serious at minimizing them to the least. You are not asked to be perfect or sinless, but today we want to promise Allah and ourselves that we will never insist on a disobeying Him. Search within yourself for the sins you do and you know that they are wrong and be determined to stop them. It is understandable if you forget or get weak and do them again, but quickly repent and ask Allah for His forgiveness and renew the promise. **We Must Not Insist On Disobeying Allah.** Its a Divine Law **"When people insist on disobedience, they are destroyed."**

Imam Ali (rAa) said: "No calamity has descended except by disobedience, and no calamity is repelled except by repentance." The woman that was killed two days ago in Baghdad was because of the sins of her sister on the other side of the globe. The man that was killed yesterday in Jerusalem was a result of his Muslim brother's sin in the country next to his. The whole status of our Muslim Ummah is the result of accumulating sins for the past 100 years. It has to stop because if the disobedience goes on at this rate we will never rise up again. **It's a Divine Law and there is no way around it.**

Look back in history. Why did Adam and Hawwa (Eve) leave Paradise? It was because of disobedience. Why was Shaytan (Satan) cursed and expelled from the mercy of Allah? It was because he insisted on a sin (arrogance). Look at the people of Lut, what happened to them? They were destroyed because of their sins. They refused to follow the guidance of Allah and insisted on committing their enormous sin (sodomy). Allah the Almighty says, **"But the (mighty) Blast overtook them before morning, And We turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay. Behold! in this are Signs for those who by tokens do understand" (15:73-75).** Muslims!! Do you see the danger of insisting on disobeying Allah? Try your best not to commit sins, and if you do, quickly repent and be determined not to do it again.

Anas ibn Malik asked A'isha (rAa) the wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Mother of the Believers: "O Mother, when does the Earth shake and quake (*zalzala*)?" She replied, "O Son, its when drinking intoxicants spreads, as well as adultery and other forms of disobedience. Then Allah tells the Earth to shake and quake." So Anas asked, "Is it as a punishment?" She replied, "No! But it is mercy for them (so they may wake up)." Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, **"If disobedience spreads in my Ummah, Allah will overwhelm them with calamities."**

Never think that tiny sins don't matter because they accumulate and cause grave consequences on the long run. Like a drop of water that might seem harmless, but when these drops of water get together, they make a flood that wipes out cities.

Let tonight be a night of sincere repentance. Ask Allah to forgive your sins and promise Him and promise yourself that you will resist committing sins with all the power you have. Ask Allah to make our Ummah rise with your repentance to Him, ask Him to make our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Palestine and all over the world victorious with this repentance that you have made. We need to change, because unless we change, Allah won't change our Ummah's condition.

How to hate disobedience:

Ibn Al-Qayim described the consequences of disobedience. Learning these consequences will help you resist committing sins in shaa Allah. Print them out and hang them in your room, next to your computer screen, and in any place you frequently disobey Allah.

The consequences of disobedience:

1- The prevention of Knowledge. Knowledge is a light, which Allah throws into the heart, and disobedience extinguishes this light. Imam Al-Shaafi'e said, "I complained to Wakee' about the weakness of my memory, so he ordered me to **abandon disobedience**. And informed me that the knowledge is light. And that the light of Allah is not given to the disobedient."

2- The prevention of Sustenance. Just as Taqwa brings about sustenance, the abandonment of Taqwa causes poverty. There is nothing that can bring about sustenance like the **abandonment of disobedience**.

3- The prevention of obedience (to Allah). If there were no other punishment for sins other than that it prevents one from obeying Allah then this would be sufficient.

4- Disobedience weakens the heart and the body. Disobedience does not stop weakening the heart until its life ceases completely, rendering the body dead.

5- Disobedience reduces the lifespan and destroys any blessings. Just as righteousness increases the lifespan, sinning reduces it.

6- Disobedience sows its own seeds and gives birth by itself until separating from it and coming out of it becomes difficult for the servant.

7- Sins weaken the heart's will and resolve so that the desire for disobedience becomes strong and the desire to repent becomes weak bit by bit until the desire to repent is removed from the heart completely.

8- Every type of disobedience is a legacy of a nation from among the nations which Allah (swt) destroyed. Sodomy is a legacy of the People of Lut, taking more than one's due right and giving what is less is a legacy of the People of Shu'ayb, seeking greatness in the land and causing corruption is a legacy of the People of Pharaoh and pride/arrogance and tyranny is a legacy of the People of Hud. So the disobedient one is wearing the gown of some of these nations who were the enemies of Allah.

9- Disobedience is a cause of the servant being held in contempt by his Lord. Al-Hasan al-Basree said, "They became contemptible in (His sight) so they disobeyed Him. If they were honorable (in His sight) He would have protected them. Allah the Exalted said, **"And whomsoever Allah lowers (humiliates) there is none to give honor."** (22:18)."

10- The servant continues to commit sins until they become very easy for him and seem insignificant in his heart and this is a sign of destruction. Every time a sin becomes insignificant in the sight of the servant it becomes great in the sight of Allah. Ibn Mas'ood (rAa) said, "Indeed, the believer sees his sins as if he was standing at the foot of a mountain fearing that it will fall upon him and the sinner sees his sins like a fly which passes by his nose so he tries to remove it by waving his hand around."

11- Disobedience inherits humiliation and lowliness. Honor, all of it, lies in the obedience of Allah. Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak said, "I have seen sins kill the hearts. And humiliation is inherited by their continuity. The abandonment of sins gives life to the hearts. And the prevention of your soul is better for it."

12- Disobedience corrupts the intellect. The intellect has light and disobedience extinguishes this light. When the light of the intellect is extinguished it becomes weak and deficient.

13- When disobedience increases, the servant's heart becomes sealed so that he becomes of those who are heedless. The Exalted said, **"But no! A stain has been left on their hearts on account of what they used to earn (i.e. their actions)."** (83:14).

14- Sins cause the various types of corruption to occur in the land like corruption of the waters, the air, the plants, the fruits and the dwelling places. The Exalted said, ***"Mischief has appeared on the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have earned; that He may give them a taste of some of (the actions) they have done, in order that they may return."*** (30:41).

15- The disappearance of modesty which is the essence of the life of the heart and is the basis of every good. Its disappearance is the disappearance of all that is good. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, ***"Modesty is goodness, all of it."*** A Poet said, "And by Allah, there is no good in life or in the world when modesty goes."

16- Sins weaken and reduce the magnification of Allah, the Mighty, in the heart of the servant.

17- Sins are the cause of Allah forgetting His servant, abandoning him and leaving him to fend for himself with his soul and his Shaytan and in this is the destruction from which no deliverance can be hoped for.

18- Sins remove the servant from the realm of Ihsaan (doing good) and he is prevented from (obtaining) the reward of those who do good. When Ihsaan fills the heart it prevents it from disobedience.

19- Disobedience causes the favors (of Allah) to cease and make His revenge lawful. No blessing ceases to reach a servant except due to a sin and no retribution is made lawful upon him except due to a sin. Allah the Exalted said, ***"Whatever misfortune afflicts you then it is due to what your hands have earned and (yet) He pardons many."*** (42:30). And the Exalted also said, ***"That is because never will Allah change the favor He has bestowed on a people until they change what is with themselves."*** (8:53).

So we now realize the danger of disobeying Allah and insisting on it. Dear brothers and sisters, our Ummah needs every single one of you. We all have to participate in getting our Ummah up. We all need to change to the better, because Allah won't change our condition until we start changing ourselves.

Lets make a promise today that if there is any form of disobedience we're doing, we will do our very best to stop it. We won't insist on doing it any more. We can't afford accumulating all these sins because they're killing us.

Lets ask Allah to forgive us and help us obey Him. Lets do this for our own sake, and for our brothers and sisters that are being killed every day. Lets do this for our whole Ummah. *Please.*

Step 4: Taking an action

Law Number Four: [Muslims are not passive. If something is wrong, it must be fixed!](#)

Are you a passive person? When you see something wrong, do you try to fix it or do you wander on comforting yourself that for sure someone else will fix it? When you're walking down the street and you see something on the sidewalk and you know that someone might slip on it, do you pick it up, or do you look the other way as if you didn't see it? When you see someone smoking in a non-smoking area, do you kindly bring the persons attention to what he's doing wrong, or do you just cover your nose, or leave the place? When was the last time you participated in a public poll or in elections? Remember the last time you saw someone double parking and you knew that he's going to cause a traffic jam, did you go and ask him politely to park somewhere else so that the traffic flow wouldn't be disturbed? Or did you just say to yourself, "Isn't there an officer around here to see this?" and then you just walked away. Why are we so passive? Why do we always believe that "someone else will do it"? Why don't WE [take an action](#)? I'll tell you why, because if it doesn't directly affect us, then why should we care? Or, "we won't change the world, so why should we care?" Right? Isn't that the reason? That's not the Muslim mentality, that's not how a Muslim should act. The Muslim community is ONE body; if one organ is not functioning it affects the rest of the body.

Do you think for example that as long as you don't do drugs then your safe? Think again, because your duty isn't just to prevent yourself from taking drugs, but to help prevent it on a larger scale as much as you can. How many people are robbed by addicts that are desperate for money to buy drugs? How many people are killed by addicts? Those that were robbed or killed, they didn't do drugs, but it still affected them indirectly. Does this mean that if we see wrong we should get aggressive and force people to do what's right? Of course not. Our Lord, The All Mighty says, *"Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance."* (16:125). We must maintain the balance between ["taking an action"](#) and "being wise and not offending people".

The Dangers of being passive:

- Allah the Almighty says in the Quran: *"And fear tumult or oppression, which affects not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment."* (8:25). See how Allah the Merciful is warning us that misconduct doesn't just affect the ones that do it, but it has a wider range.

- The Companions asked the Messenger of Allah, "Will we be destroyed even if the righteous ones are amongst us?" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) replied, *"Yes, if corruption increases."* It was also reported that Allah ordered Jibreel to destroy a village that had become extremely corrupted, but Jibreel asked Allah, "O Allah, in this village is your servant that constantly prays to You", Allah replied, "Start with him! For his face never changed with disapproval to what had been going on." Because this righteous man was passive, he too was punished with the sinners.

- Omar ibn Al-Khattab said, "If a sin is committed in private, it only harms the one that does it, but if it is committed in public and no one objects and changes it, it will harm everyone!"

- The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, *"Either you enjoin Good and forbid Evil or else Allah will send His punishment to you, and you will supplicate to Him, but He won't respond."*

But why does Islam stress so much on [taking an action](#) against what's wrong? The Messenger of Allah (pbuh), the greatest teacher, gave us a great example to demonstrate the importance of this Islamic behavior. *"The likeness of the man who observes the limits prescribed by Allah and that of the man who transgresses them is like the people who get on board a ship after casting lots. Some of them are in its lower deck and some of them in its*

upper deck. Those who are in its lower deck, when they require water, go to the occupants of the upper deck. The occupants of the lower deck said to themselves, 'If we make a hole in the bottom of the ship, we shall not harm the ones who are in the upper deck.' If they leave them to carry out their design they all will be drowned. But if they do not let them go ahead (with their plan), all of them will remain safe." This example shows us the importance of thinking of our community and the entire Ummah as one body. It might seem that such a concept is alien somehow. The reason we might feel that is not because it really is an odd concept, but because we have drifted so far from the spirit of Islam where a person feels responsible for the whole society and we have become rather self-centered.

Examples of those who took an action and weren't passive:

- The believer in the Family of the Pharaoh:

Despite the Pharaoh's severe opposition to the message of Prophet Moses (pbuh) one of the royal family members embraced Islam. Allah says, **"A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: 'Will you slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah? - when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on him is (the sin of) his lie: but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you: Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies!'" (40:28).** How did Allah reward this believer's action? Allah continues, **"Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the burnt of the Penalty encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh." (40:45).** Allah protected him from all the conspiracies they had planned. Allah does not abandon those who struggle for his cause.

Are you afraid for your children and what might happen to them? Listen to your Lord, **"And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their account, so let them be careful of (their duty to) Allah, and let them speak right words." (4:9).** Fearing for your children is not an excuse, in fact Allah tells you that if you fear for them, then speak right words and fulfill your duty to Allah. He will protect them.

- The believer mentioned in Chapter 36 (Yaseen):

Allah sent three Prophets to a village. Can you believe that? Three Prophets at the same time for just one village. Of course one would think that that is more than enough. No, that's not how a Believer should react. A man came from the other side of the village to show his support to the message. He didn't react passively and comfort himself with the fact that there were three Prophets already No, he **took an action!** Allah says, **"Then there came running, from the farthest part of the City, a man, saying, 'O my people! Obey the apostles. Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who have themselves received Guidance'." (36:20,21).** Then what? They killed him! They killed the man that came to support the Messengers. But Allah never forgets those who struggle for his cause. The Almighty says, **"It was said: 'Enter the Garden.' He said: 'Ah me! Would that my People knew (what I know)! For that my Lord has granted me Forgiveness and has enrolled me among those held in honor!'" (36:26,27).**

- Solomon's Hoopoe (Hud-hud Solayman):

Solomon (pbuh), a Prophet and a King had amongst his Kingdom a bird, a Hoopoe. This Hoopoe proved to be more passionate about Allah's religion than many human beings today. It saw a kingdom worshipping the sun, what did it do? Did it say "I'm just a Hoopoe, what can I do?" Did it say "No way, this is too big for me, did I see anything? Nope I didn't see anything"? Do you know what the Hoopoe did? It approached these people and investigated what they were doing, gathered the information and flew back to Jerusalem to tell Prophet Solomon (pbuh). Allah says **"But the Hoopoe tarried not far: he (came up to Solomon and) said: 'I have compassed (territory) which you have not compassed, and I have come to you from Saba with tidings true.'" (27:22).** It told Solomon all about what it had witnessed, and that Hoopoe was a main reason that they all entered Islam. (Sigh) If only we had a couple of those Hoopoes today. If only Muslims today would have the same enthusiasm for Islam as the Hoopoe had.

- The Ant:

It wasn't just the Hoopoe that **took an action**, it was also an ant. When Prophet Solomon (pbuh) was marching with his army and was approaching an ant kingdom, an ant jumped into action and called, **"O ants!! Get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it!!" (27:18)**. Solomon (pbuh) was impressed by this response from the ant. Allah tells us, **"So he (Solomon) smiled, amused at her speech.." (27:19)**. Brothers and sisters, if we compared ourselves with this ant, who will turn out to be more passionate and dedicated to the welfare of their fellow beings?

-The Companion Al-Habbab ibn Al-Munzir (rAa):

This companion demonstrated to us how one could object and at the same time maintain the highest levels of courtesy and politeness. Before the Battle of Badr, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) told the Muslim army to camp in a certain place. Habbab saw that there is a more strategic place that if the Muslim army camped at, would give them an upper hand in the battle. He didn't say "Well if the Prophet said so then why should I say otherwise?" he wasn't passive, and at the same time he wasn't vulgar or rude. How did Habbab present his opinion that contradicted with the opinion of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh)? He asked, "O Messenger of Allah, is your opinion based on a revelation from Allah, or is it war tactics and strategy?" The Prophet replied **"No, its war tactics and strategy."** Then Habbab proposed, "Then this is not the most strategic place to camp." Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) accepted his proposal, a proposal that was one of the main factors that led to the victory of the Muslim army in this critical battle.

- A Muslim student in the 21st Century:

He lived in a "Muslim country" that was as far as possible from Islam. There wasn't a single mosque or even a prayer room in any university in the whole country. On the first day of his freshman year he asked around for a mosque or a prayer room and was answered with strange looks as if he was asking how to reach Mars. Finally a janitor told him that there aren't any, but he could pray in an empty room in the basement. It was a dark humid room with a worn out carpet. The student said, "No, I won't pray under ground!" He went up in the middle of the campus and cried out the azan (call for prayer). People stopped and watched this strange scene. After the azan he sat for a couple of minutes then got up to pray. First few days he was alone, then the next week students started to join him because they still had faith in their hearts even though it was buried under layers of worldly distractions. The Dean saw this and was troubled by the fact that the students would make ablution (*wudu*) in the bathrooms and walk dripping water until they reach the prayer area, which was outdoors. The image of shoes taken off and scattered next to the students during praying also troubled him. So what did the Dean do? He built a Mosque!! Not only that, but all the surrounding Universities knew about it and they too built mosques in each campus. Can you believe that? It all started with one student that refused to be passive and had the courage and dedication to **take an action**. Now he gets a share of the reward all the students get when they pray in these mosques until this World comes to an end.

Brothers and sisters, no one will clean this mess that we are in except us. If you turn away from it, you're just leaving it for your children, and it will get worse. If we want our Ummah back in shape we have to have a positive impact on life, we all have to contribute. Lets stop being passive. Don't underestimate the impact you could make. If you are sincere in changing yourself and your surroundings then call unto Allah with humbleness and He will assist you, and if He assists you, nothing could go wrong.

Dear Brothers and sisters, our Ummah needs every single one of you. Allah didn't say that He doesn't change the condition of "a person" until he or she changes "him or herself", No. Allah said, **"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves" (13:11)**. This means that if you decide not to join your fellow Muslim brothers and sisters in this transition from defeat to victory and weakness to strength, you will act as an obstacle for them. I'm not pressuring you. I'm just hoping that you will take a step forward. Let the step be as big as you decide, but please, *please*, don't just stand there when the situation of our Ummah gets worse every day. **Please** take a step forward. **We all need you with us.**

Step 5: Confidence in Allah

Law Number Five: [We must have unshakable confidence in Allah's Abilities](#)

Do you ever have doubts about Allah's Abilities? Not necessarily expressing it, but deep inside, do you find yourself saying, "No... I don't think Allah could do that"? As Muslims we should have unshakable **confidence** that Allah has Ultimate Sovereignty over this Universe. He controls everything, and nothing happens without His Will. Do you know why we sometimes fall into this mistake? It's because we correlate Allah's Ultimate Abilities with the appearance of the results that we want to see. If we want something specific to happen, like someone dear to us that is severely ill, to become well, and we pray to Allah for this and then this person dies, doubt starts to crawl into our hearts. We start, in our subconscious, to doubt that Allah has the ability to cure. Allah Has Ultimate Wisdom, and it is not always that we grasp the wisdom in different things. But because we are sure that Allah is The Most Merciful, we are certain that what ever happens is for our benefit. We must have firm belief in Allah's Sovereignty and Ability. **It's a Divine Law: [If you have unshakable belief in Allah, He will help you.](#)**

For example, when Moses (pbuh) fled with the Children of Israel from Egypt and they found themselves in front of the Red Sea with the Pharaoh's army behind them and there was no way out, what happened? The Children of Israel said, **"We are sure to be overtaken."** (26:62). But Moses (pbuh) was certain that Allah has power over all things and could get them out of this situation, with **confidence**, **"(Moses) said: "By no means! My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!"** (26:63). He didn't know "how" Allah will help him, but he was sure that Allah "will" help him. So Allah ordered him to hit the water with his staff and the sea split open making a path between two mountains of water. Allah, The Creator, changed the properties of water, He is the One that decreed them in the first place and He is One that could change them if He wishes.

Take another example. When Abraham (pbuh) was thrown by a catapult towards a huge bonfire and while flying in the air, Jibreel (Gabriel) came to him asking, "Need any help?" Abraham replied, "From you? No thanks". Abraham was **confident**, totally **confident** that Allah Sees and Hears what's happening, and that if Allah wants to save him, He will. And that's what happened, Abraham was saved, but how? Did Allah order the sky to rain and turn out the fire? Did Allah order the wind to blow Abraham off course so that he wouldn't fall into the fire? No. Allah changed the properties of fire and ordered it to be cool and safe for Abraham. Why did Allah do this? One reason is so that people would know that Allah is in control of everything and to strengthen their faith in His Ability. It was so that we Muslims in the 21st century realize that we worship The King of this whole universe and that nothing happens without His permission and that He has the ability to do anything He wills.

Allah says, **"With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. There isn't a leaf that falls but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a record clear (to those who can read)".** (6:59). Do you see the how Great and Knowledgeable Allah is? And guess what? We Muslims believe in Him and obey Him. We depend on Him and He is there to help us.... What then could possibly go wrong?

In another verse Allah says, **"Say: 'O Allah. Lord of Power (And Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please: You endue with honor whom You please, and You bring low whom You please: In Your hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power'"** (3:26). See how powerful Allah is? Imagine if your Boss at work, the Dean of your college, or the Principle of your school was your father and he promised you that he would help you with what ever you need. Imagine the feeling of security you will have, imagine the **confidence** you will feel. Now think about this; The Ruler of this whole universe is Allah, The Powerful, The Merciful, The Ever Living, and He says, **"Behold! Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve;**

Those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil;- For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present and in the Hereafter; no change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity." (10:62-64).

Brothers and Sisters, lets reinforce our [confidence](#) in Allah. Lets turn to Him with humbleness and devotion, and ask Him to help us revive our Ummah. He is the One who Gives Life, lets ask Him to give life to our Ummah. He is the Guider to The Straight Path, lets beg Him to Guide us all. Nothing is difficult for Allah. When Allah ordered Noah (pbuh) to build an ark (boat), Noah was in the middle of the desert where there was no sea or river, but because he had [confidence](#) in Allah, he got to work. To a non-Believer it would seem insane to built an ark in the middle of the desert, a waste of time. But when the flood started, the wisdom behind building the ark became obvious. Today we are building an ark that seems nonsense to a non-Muslim, or may even seem as a waste of time for a weak Muslim. The ark we are building today is **"Until they change themselves"**. It needs lots of work and may seem pointless to many. But the day will come when those who participated in building this ark will succeed, and those who wandered away will regret. Lets get to work, all of us, because this ark needs a lot of effort, patience, and [confidence in Allah](#)!

Step 6: Seriousness

Law Number Six: [A Muslim must know how to be serious](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I would like to shed some light on the importance of "Seriousness" in reviving our Ummah. Statistics show that the percentage of youth in Muslim populations is far more than the percentage in non-Muslim populations. For example the percentage of the population below 20 years of age is 42% in Cairo, Egypt, versus only 16% in Bern, Switzerland (UN-HABITAT CitiBase). In general, the percentage of youth and young adults in our Ummah is around 70% while it's only 25% in Western countries. This means that in the very near future, potential and energy will be in the Muslim Ummah. But if the low percentages in the West are more serious than the high percentages in our Ummah, then they will be more powerful and they will prevail. Don't underestimate your importance, because you are the meter by which the potential of our Ummah is measured. What does that mean? I'll tell you. When sociologists want to predict which country will rise in the following few decades and which country will fall, they look at the youth, they study the condition of those who will be in charge of the country in the future. Let me give you an example of how this was applied.

The Muslims ruled Spain for 8 centuries during which they built a civilization that was superior to any other European country at that time. The Portuguese were always trying to end the Muslim presence in Spain but they knew that they could never confront them with military. So they sent their spies into Al-Andalusia to investigate the condition of the youth. When the reports came in describing how the Muslim youth used to compete in memorizing Quran and Hadith, or practicing Chemistry and reciting poetry, the sociologist would conclude that it's impossible to drive them out of Spain as long as their youth were that serious about self-improvement. The centuries passed by until the time came when the spies would investigate the condition of our youth in Spain to find a young man weeping because his girlfriend left him. There was no longer interest in knowledge or anything fruitful. They were no longer serious about life. Then, and only then the Portuguese sociologists wrote their recommendations stating that the time was now suitable to root the Muslims out. We lived in Spain for 800 years, and we were driven out in 20 days!

Now take a look at us, the youth of the Muslim Ummah, do you think we are serious about self-improvement? Do we feel that we have a mission to accomplish in this life? Do we feel that we have a message to convey? Are we serious enough to take the responsibility of this Ummah from those before us and get it back up and running? How are Muslim students ranked in schools and universities? Are they serious about their education? How's your younger brother doing? Does he ever get up from in front of those video games? I'm not trying to depress you; there truly is an awakening amongst the youth of our Ummah. I would be denying a fact if I didn't notice that, but still we need to be more serious with our lives and dreams. They say that childhood is energy without wisdom, and being an elder means having wisdom without energy, but youth and early adulthood is the best time you could achieve the combination between both. So let's take advantage of it!

How big are your dreams? How dedicated are you to accomplish your dreams and your plans? Do you think you're too young to contribute and have an impact on your Ummah? Do you know how old Prophet Abraham (pbuh) was when he destroyed all those idols and was thrown into the fire? The verse says, **"They said, 'Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!' They said, 'We heard a youth talk of them: He is called Abraham.'" (21:59,60)**. He was a youth, below twenty years of age!! You are not too young to contribute, but you must be serious about your mission in life, and dedicated to it. What about Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist pbuh) how old was he when Allah made him a Prophet? Allah says, **"O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with might: and We gave him Wisdom even as a youth" (19:12)**. Can you feel the dedication in Yahya the young man? Take hold of the Book with might! Come brothers and sisters, let's take hold of the Quran with might!! We aren't too young to do that, but we need to be serious and dedicated. We are over One Billion Muslims, but why are we so weak? Because amongst the things we lack are

seriousness and dedication. Do you know what will happen to our Ummah if we aren't serious? The same thing that happened to the Children of Israel.

After the Children of Israel fled with Moses (pbuh) from Egypt, Moses told them to prepare to enter the Sacred Land, Jerusalem. He told them that they would have to fight the tyrant that is currently occupying the Holy Land, but how did the Jews respond? **"They said: 'O Moses! While they remain there, never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time. Go you, and your Lord, and fight you two, while we sit here (and watch).'" (5:24).** They weren't serious, they didn't feel dedication to their mission. So what was Allah's response to this? Allah said, **"Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years: In distraction will they wander through the land: And don't feel sorry over these rebellious people." (5:26).** But why forty years? Allah wanted to replace this unserious generation with a new one that was more dedicated. So Prophet Moses (pbuh) spent this time bringing up a new generation and they were the ones that entered the Sacred Land under the leadership of Yusha (Joshua). So if we, the youth of the Muslim Ummah, do not get serious about our mission and about personal self-improvement, the situation will only get worse until a future generation arises that will be more serious, more dedicated and Allah will grant them the victory we wasted.

This is another example of dedication and seriousness. During the Battle of Uhud, many Muslims started to flee and the enemy started to focus their strike on Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). So the Messenger of Allah while defending himself called out **"Who would push them away from me and he will be guaranteed Paradise?!"** So a group of Muslims rushed to their Prophet fighting fiercely to protect him, they were all teenagers. They started to fall one by one, martyr after martyr, until the last one remained, his name was Yazeed ibn As-Sakan. Yazeed (rAa) fought and fought like a lion until he was overwhelmed by his wounds and stabs and collapsed. He fell and his face hit the ground. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) cried out **"No!!! Raise his face from the dirt!! Yazeed's face should never lie on the dirt, raise his face!!"** The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) took Yazeed's dead body into his arms, looked up and cried, **"O Allah, I bear witness that Yazeed has fulfilled his duty! O Allah, I am pleased with him!"** Yazeed stood when many people fled. He defended the Prophet and gave his own life willingly to protect this religion. He was serious and dedicated.

Muhammad Al-Fateh (Sultan Mehmet Fatih) is the Muslim leader who opened Constantinople when he was only 23 years old. When he was a child he heard that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said **"Verily you shall conquer Constantinople. What a wonderful leader will that leader be, and what a wonderful army will that army be!"** That was it for Muhammad; he decided to be that man. That was his call, that was his dream and mission in life, and he was serious and dedicated, and Allah granted him success.

You don't have to conquer a city to prove you're serious. Lets take some examples to show people that were dedicated in a different way. Look at Margaret Thatcher, she is a non-Muslim, but she was a great example of seriousness and dedication. When Britain was at war with Argentina she continued to wear only dark clothes for four years. Whether she wore dark or light clothes wouldn't have an impact on the battle, but it was to show her people that she was dedicated and serious, and that her life during this war has changed. Salahuddin promised himself not to smile until Jerusalem was liberated; he wanted to prove to himself that he was dedicated to this mission.

Once Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) saw a young man walking slowly like a weak, sick person, and asked him, **"Are you ill?"** When the man replied with no, Omar rebuked him and said **"We do not like, or accept that someone from the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) walks like that!"** So lets get up and raise our heads, we've got a mission to accomplish. Look at Germany and Japan, how did they recover so quickly after World War 2? They had serious youth. They are non-Muslims and look at how they developed themselves. Imagine if we become as serious, not only will we excel materially but also spiritually, we will have a balanced civilization, we will deserve to be as Allah said about us **"You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah" (3:110).** Seriousness!! Lets try to be a little more serious about our lives.

Step 7: Brotherhood and Purifying Hearts from Hate

Law Number Seven: [Our Ummah can't survive unless we love each other](#)

Allah has promised us that He will change the condition of our Ummah if we change ourselves. It's a Divine Rule. But have you ever thought about how we will react towards each other after Allah grants us this promised victory? For example, I'm afraid that one day, after Allah grants us victory, we will hate some of our Muslims brothers and sisters. I'm afraid that in the future, Iraqi and Kuwaiti Muslims won't feel easy about each other. In their subconscious, Iraqi's will think that Kuwaiti's were behind all what happened and there will be an emotional barrier between them. Not so far back, we used to feel bad towards our Palestinian brothers and sisters, we used to think that they deserve what was going on to them because they sold their lands to the Israelis in the first place, they let them in. Time passed and we realized that this was a wicked lie and big illusion, it turned out that we were just saying that to feel that we have no responsibility towards them. We saw them on the TV sacrificing their own lives for their land. We saw families being driven out of their homes before it was demolished. We saw children and youth driving the Israeli army crazy with their stones. A Palestinian family today is ashamed if their household is without martyrs. Our enemies tried to sow hate in our hearts between us so that we wouldn't care about them.

We can't allow hate towards one another find its way into our hearts. We have to maintain our [brotherhood](#) and purify our hearts from hate towards each another.

Do you know that [Brotherhood](#) is deeply embedded in our religion? It's a fundamental concept in Islam. Allah says, ***"The Believers are but one Brotherhood" (49:10)***. Let me demonstrate to you how essential [Brotherhood](#) is to Muslims, and I won't start from Prophet Muhammad's time, no, I'll go back much before that. Lets start with Prophet Moses (pbuh). When Allah told him that he must go to the Pharaoh of Egypt and convey to him the message of Allah, what did Moses ask? Allah tells us that he asked, ***"And give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother; Add to my strength through him, And make him share my task: So that we may glorify you much and remember you much, Surely, You are seeing us."*** (20:29-35). Moses asked Allah to let Aaron be with him because his brother was so important to him and Moses knew that as a team they would be more successful and would help each other be better servants to Allah. Can you sense the love between both of them from the verses? Then Allah replied, ***"You are indeed granted your request, O Moses" (20:36)***.

The two brothers demonstrate to us the importance of [brotherhood](#) and unity once again when Moses went to meet Allah and left Aaron in charge of the Children of Israel. When the Jews started to worship a golden cow Aaron tried to guide them back to The Straight Path and some people responded but most of them refused. Aaron noticed that this was causing a split in the community between the true Believers and those who deviated. Aaron feared that this would lead to breaking the union between the Children of Israel, so he preferred to be patient and leave them as they were until Moses came back. When Moses returned and was devastated to see his people worshiping a golden cow he blamed Aaron for not being responsible enough. Allah says, ***"(Aaron) replied: 'O son of my mother! Seize (me) not by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Truly I feared that you would say, You have caused a division among the children of Israel, and you did not respect my word!'"*** (20:94). This is how unity and maintaining [brotherhood](#) was important to Prophet Aaron.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught us how essential [brotherhood](#) is for Muslims and for Islam to flourish. In the midst of oppression and persecution in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad started to preach Islam to other tribes and cities hoping that he could find a place that is more secure than Mecca to move to. He never thought of going to Yethreb though (Medina afterwards) because there was an ongoing war between two tribes there, Aws and Khazraj. Do you know why there was a war? Let me tell you. The Jews moved to Yethreb because their sacred scripts told them that the last Prophet will appear soon and he will migrate to this city, so they decided to move and settle there to wait for his appearance.

Seeing that there are two big tribes in Yethreb they feared that they would drive them out, so they decided to keep them busy fighting one another. Also another reason to start a war between Aws and Khazraj was to profit from selling weapons to them. So the Jews divided themselves into two groups, each group allied with one tribe, either Aws or Khazraj. Part of the alliance agreement was that if a Jew allied with Aws is killed then the whole tribe must participate in punishing the attacking tribe. So the Jews would plot fake clashes between themselves where a Jew allied with Aws would "kill" a Jew allied with Khazraj thereby sparking a war between the two tribes. So the tribal war in Medina was at its peak and the Jews were fueling it more and more, and therefore Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) never even considered it as a place to immigrate to. Then one day Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) met 6 youth from the Khazraj tribe in Mecca and they all accepted Islam and went back to Yethreb. The next year they were 12 Muslims, 9 from Khazraj and 3 from Aws. When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) saw that, he became very happy because he felt that Islam was bringing back the **brotherhood** between these two tribes. Another year passed and Prophet Muhammad migrated to Yethreb and announced the ending of the ongoing war between Aws and Khazraj, and the relationship between them became one of **brotherhood** and mutual respect and love. The Jews failed ever since to restart any war between them, the **brotherhood** was far too strong, it was strengthened by a flow of revelations encouraging **brotherhood**...

"And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you: That you may be guided." (3:103).

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that you may receive Mercy." (49:10).

"And those who came after them say: "Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancor (or sense of hate) against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful." (59:10).

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "On the Day of Resurrection, Allah, the Exalted, will say: `Where are those who have mutual love for the sake of My Glory? Today I shall shelter them in My Shade when there will be no shade except Mine.'" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said, "Allah, the Exalted, has said: `For those who love one another for the sake of My Glory, there will be seats of light (on the Day of Resurrection), and they will be envied by the Prophets and martyrs.'"

One day Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sitting with one of his companions and a man was passing by. The companion said to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), "Do you know, I love this man for the sake of Allah", so the Messenger of Allah asked, "Did you tell him?" and the companion replied "No". Prophet Muhammad said, "Go quickly and tell him! When a man loves his brother (for Allah's sake) let him tell him that he loves him". This is how fundamental **brotherhood** is in Islam.

In the Battle of Uhud 70 Muslims were killed. After the battle was over and the Muslims were burying the dead, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) suddenly halted the process asking loudly while searching between the dead bodies, "Where is Amr ibn Al-Jamoooh and Abdullah ibn Haram??!" When the companions asked why, he replied, "Bury them together! They loved each other in this world for the sake of Allah, let them be buried together!" Can you believe that? But this doesn't mean that as brothers, nothing goes wrong between us, we are after all human. Here's an example....

One day Abu Zar (rAa) had an argument with Bilal (rAa) and called him "Son of a Black Woman". Bilal became so sad he went and complained to the Prophet (pbuh). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) went to Abu Zar and angrily asked, "Did you say that?! You are a man who has ignorance in him." Abu Zar (rAa) deeply regretted what he did. He put his cheek on the ground and asked Bilal to step on his face saying "I swear by Allah that you step on my face so that Allah may forgive me", but Bilal didn't and he forgave him, and when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died, he was pleased with them both. Brotherhood dear brothers and sisters, we might have our difference, we might argue, but we will always be one family.

Lets revive the sense of brotherhood in our Ummah. It's a shield that protects our unity and grants us Allah's mercy. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) told us that on the day of Judgment, two men would stand in front of Allah and one of them would say "O Allah, this man took something from me against my will!!" So Allah would tell the other man to give the first man's property back, but he doesn't speak, he remains silent. So the first one says, "O Allah, then let me take from his good deeds!" When Allah tells the second man to give the first one from his good deeds (*hasanat*), he looks up with despair and cries, "O Lord, I no longer have any good deeds." So the first one (persistently) demands "O Allah, then take from my sins and dump it onto him!!" Then Allah asks him, "How about something better than that? Raise your head." So the first man raises his head and sees a spectacular Palace and says "Woow!! Who's Palace is that?? A Prophet?? A Martyr??" Allah replies, "To whomever has the price." The man asks "And who could possibly have the price of such a Palace??" Allah replies "You." "Me??!!" the man asks with surprise. Allah explains to him saying "Yes you, by forgiving your brother, you will have the price." So the man says, "I forgive him O Lord!! I forgive him!!" and Allah tells him, "Take your brother's hand and enter Paradise together!"

Lets forgive each other dear brothers and sisters, lets strengthen our bonds, and lets revive our brotherhood. Lets remove any hatred towards each other from our hearts. We need that to change our condition, and if we change our condition, Allah will certainly change the condition of our Ummah.

Step 8: Goodness and Perfection (Ihsan)

Law Number Eight: [Allah wants us to do our best at everything we do](#)

"*Ihsan*" is one of those words that can't be translated into just one English word but has a rather broad and deep meaning. Allah says in the Quran, "Allah *yuhibbul-muhsineen*." **"Allah loves those who do good." (3:148)**. A *muhsin* is one who does good actions and *Ihsan* is goodness itself. *Ihsan* also means to perfect, to excel or to show proficiency and excellence. Therefore it could be considered that the Arabic word *Ihsan* has a dual meaning, Goodness and Excellence. We Muslims need to strive to achieve excellence, proficiency, and perfection in all good actions we make.

A civilization can't rise if people don't try their best to achieve the best results in what ever they are doing. If you are a student you should not focus your efforts on barely passing your exams, No. You should be aspiring to actually increase your knowledge throughout the academic year and at the end prove that you've learned by achieving the best results you could. If you are a teacher, you shouldn't just stand in front of the class and recite a lesson, No. You should try your very best to have a positive impact on your students, to add something to their knowledge. The same thing applies if you work in a factory or produce any type of product. Don't just make something that looks good on the outside but will function for only half of its intended life. This may seem as a general behavior that everyone should apply regardless to his or her belief, but aside to that, it's a fundamental Islamic behavior. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, **"Verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does a job he should perfect it"**. Unfortunately, Muslims have forgotten this concept and abandoned it. On the other hand, the West realized the importance of quality and perfection and by applying them their civilization grew and became more powerful. This is a Divine Law and it applies to Muslims and non-Muslims: **If you perfect what you do, you improve your condition and the condition of your surrounding**. It applies to people regardless of their belief, the same way the law of gravity applies to us all.

A study was made to estimate the number of hours worked by employees each day in different countries all over the world. Not the number of hours they spend in their workplace, but the "net hours" spent actually working (i.e. after subtracting lunch breaks, going to the bathroom, chatting etc.). While some Western countries and Japan reached high numbers like 8 hours, some Muslim countries reached as low as 12 or 5 minutes!! Five minutes of pure work!! Can you believe that?? And we want Allah to give us victory! How could you expect Allah to give Muslims victory and let them lead the world if some Muslim countries work less than an hour a day? We're not applying the Divine Rule and therefore our situation will stay as it is. *Ihsan* brothers and sisters, we need more *Ihsan* in our lives, with both of its meanings, goodness and perfection.

Allah says, **"Allah commands justice, the doing of good (ihsan), and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may receive admonition" (16:90)**.

Maintaining *Ihsan* is something Allah The Almighty commands us to do, why is it then that we Muslims are sometimes the laziest or the sloppiest? Of course not all Muslims are like that, but it seems to be the current theme in our Ummah. Some countries are famous for certain products because they perfect them and have the highest quality. For example you have Japanese electronics, Italian shoes and Swiss watches, army knives and cheese. What about Muslim countries; how many products have we perfected to the extent that a customer buys it while confident that it's the best in the market? Advancing and achieving such a reputation isn't a "Modern World" concept, it's Islamic, it's in our religion. Someone once told me, "Thank God the non-Muslims in the West are so advanced and are discovering all these new things every day so that we could benefit from them directly without effort, and at the same time have more time to worship Allah!" At first I thought he was joking but unfortunately he wasn't. He forgot that working is a form of worshiping Allah if the intentions are correct. Didn't Allah say in the Quran, **"And say: 'Work: For soon will Allah observe your work,**

and His Messenger, and the Believers: Soon will you be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did." (9:105). Muslims should participate in making this world a better place and we must have our contribution. Worshiping Allah isn't only by performing rituals. For example, going to school or work every day could be a form of worship if your intentions are to obey Allah, acquire knowledge for the betterment of Muslims and Humanity, and being a good example of a Muslim. If we are not successful and at the forefront, how will we attract non-Muslims to Islam?

One meaning of **lhsan** is doing good actions, but when doing good we should also try to perfect it. For example, greeting another Muslim by saying "*Asalamualaykum*" is a good act, but saying "*Asalamualaykum wa rahmatulahi wa barakatu*" is even better. There's even another step higher, which is saying the greeting and shaking his hand, and you could approach perfection even more by also smiling. See how we should try to achieve perfection and excellence in our acts. It should be a constant attempt in all aspects of life whether its rituals, working, relationships with others etc. We need to try to implement **lhsan** in everything we do.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) instructed us to perfection in several ways and situations. One of the Prophetic sayings dealing with **lhsan** is particularly interesting. Please read the explanation after it to understand what the Prophet (pbuh) meant. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "**Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.**" One might wonder why the Messenger of Allah didn't say, "If you pray, pray well, and if you fast, fast well", why kill and slaughter? Do you know why Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) referred to slaughter in this Hadith? Not because Muslims are blood thirsty, absolutely not, but because slaughtering an animal means that you are ending its life. What difference does it make if I kill it well or not, it's going to die anyway, it won't have any "bad memories" about it, and so what's the big deal? No, that's not how a Muslim sees things. A Muslim should implement excellence in every aspect of life, even when it comes to an animal's final moments in life. If you treat the animal well and with perfection when killing it, you will certainly treat it even better while its alive; you will shelter it with excellence and mercy, and you will feed it in such a manner as well. Not only did the Prophet (pbuh) teach us this with just words, he demonstrated to us how to achieve this proficiency in a practical sense as well (sharpening the blade and sparing suffering). This shows us that proficiency isn't just "an idea" but one must also seek the means to apply it.

Another example is Divorce. Usually one correlates divorce with arguments, fights and going to court. But look what Allah says, "**A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold Together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness (lhsan).**" (2:229). Even during divorce a person is supposed to maintain **lhsan**, because if you could do so during divorce you will certainly be able to do so during a happy marriage. Do you see how the Quran or Prophetic sayings give examples of certain extremes in life? If you could achieve **lhsan** during these extremes you could certainly achieve it in normal situations also.

Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) was imprisoned unjustly. He was falsely accused of trying to rape the wife of the Minister, it's a disgraceful accusation, but he was patient. Many years later while still in prison, he was told that the King of Egypt had a dream, Allah says, "**The king (of Egypt) said: 'I do see (in a vision) seven fat cows, whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O you chiefs! Expound to me my vision if it be that you can interpret visions.'**" (12:43). Yusuf (pbuh) knew what it meant, a devastating starvation that would last for 7 years. What did he do? Did he request that they let him free first? Did he decide not to tell them what it meant so all those non-Believers would starve to death? No, instead he demonstrated to us **lhsan**. Without putting any conditions he interpreted the dream for them; seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of devastating drought and starvation. Not only that, but even though he wasn't asked, he gave them the solution to this coming crises. He planned for them what to do in the following 15 years. He told them to increase their productivity as much as possible in

the first seven years while minimizing their consumption so that they would have enough food to survive the seven years of drought. When he was freed from prison and became the Minister of Agriculture and Economy he organized the process of storing the food and then distributing it during the second seven years. Since the drought was all over the Middle East, he introduced a system where foreign countries could exchange food from Egypt with any of their homemade products. He did this in order to encourage them to be productive and so they would look at the food they get from Egypt as trade and not charity. He did all this even though they were all non-Believers. This is a message to all our brothers and sisters that are living in non-Muslim countries. Wherever you are, you must have a positive impact, you have to make a contribution, because you're a Muslim.

The best type of [Ihsan](#) though is [Ihsan](#) in your relationship with Allah, your Creator. To worship Allah as if you see Him, and even though you can't really see Him, always keep in mind that He sees you.

Excellence leads to perfection, and perfection is our ultimate goal. We strive to perfect our characters so that we could reach the highest attainable status in the sight of Allah, and also to perfect our surroundings and our work so that we wouldn't feel ashamed when we present them in front of Allah, the Messenger and the Believers.

Those who achieve excellence and perfection in this world will lead because the Divine Rule say so, and if anyone else leads us, we will always be lagging behind. So we must change our current condition, and when we do that, certainly, Allah will change the condition of our entire Ummah, and we will lead the world in shaa Allah.

Step 9: The Honor and Might of Muslims ('Ezzah)

Law Number Nine: [The only source of 'Ezzah is Allah](#)

We have previously discussed the importance of not being passive and that we should take positive actions, and the importance of seriousness and perfecting what we do. This time we will talk about the **Honor** and **Dignity** ('Ezzah) of the Muslim Ummah. 'Ezzah encompasses meanings of **Honor**, **Dignity**, **Might**, and **Glory**, and its opposite is *Zillah* or humility. Today we will say, "Yes" to **Honor** and "No" to humility. A Muslim only accepts **Honor** and never settles to humility.

Allah wants us to be an **Honorable** and **Mighty** Ummah, so why do we drift ourselves to the weakness of humility? Do you know how we sowed the seeds of humility in our Ummah? When a Muslim father slaps his wife on the face, in front of his children, he's sowing the seeds of humility. When a teacher beats a student or punishes him or her in a humiliating way and when a father punishes his son in front of his friends, they are both sowing seeds of humiliation. All these things make a Muslim used to humiliation and make us forget that we were to be **honorable** people.

A person's feeling of **self-honor** is something that could either be developed or impaired. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) showed us how to develop this feeling in our children. One day Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sitting with some of his respected Companions and on his right was Ibn Abbas who was still a young teenager. When the Messenger of Allah used to drink in such a gathering, he would pass the cup to the one sitting on his right to drink also. Then this person on his right would pass it onto the one on his right and so on. In this specific situation it would mean that Ibn Abbas, a young teenager, would drink before big names like Abu Bakr and Omar ibn Al-Khattab. So when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) drank and was going to pass the cup he asked Ibn Abbas, "**Would you give me the permission to give your share to my dear brothers before you?**" Of course the Prophet (pbuh) could have just given them the cup and it would be understandable because the preference would be to elder Muslims especially if they are as respected as Abu Bakr. But Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) wanted to develop Ibn Abbas' feeling of **self-esteem** and **dignity** and didn't want to make him feel that he had no importance or that he was weightless. Ibn Abbas replied, "By Allah, I could never give my portion from you to anybody else" (drinking right after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from the same cup was a privilege to Ibn Abbas), and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) let him drink first. See how Islam develops our sense of 'Ezzah?

In Muslim countries you see that companies respect and honor the foreign non-Muslim expert, but the local expert with the same expertise and skill is not treated the same, this makes us feel humiliated. I will never forget when I was on a plane one day and the take-off was postponed. The plane had both Arabs and non-Arabs. One of the crewmembers passed by every single non-Arab apologizing for the delay and didn't apologize to a single Arab, this increases one's sense of humility.

Self-Respect and Honor are genuine Arab characters. An Arab would prefer death to humiliation. The sense of self-honor and might is integrated even in the Pre-Islamic Arab. Do you know why the door of the Ka'ba is lifted above the ground? So that no one could enter it except with the Meccans permission. The Pagan Arabs of Mecca before Islam honored the Ka'ba so much and felt that it violates their 'Ezzah and Glory to let anyone enter the Ka'ba without their permission. Compare this to present Muslim Arabs; the entire Al-Aqsa Mosque is occupied, and many Muslim lands as well. Muslim blood has become the cheapest. Where is our sense of dignity, self-respect and might? Where is our 'Ezzah, Is it gone?

The individual Muslim must maintain his own **Honor** and **Dignity** so that the whole Ummah could get its **Honor** and **Dignity** back. But how does one do that? If you want self-respect, glory and honor, get it from its source... Allah!

Allah says, ***"Who ever seeks glory and power ('Ezzah),- to Allah belongs all glory and power."*** (35:10). There is no other source. This is today's Divine Law, ***The only source of 'Ezzah is Allah.*** You can't get **Glory** or **Honor** from any other human being or country, only from Allah, because Allah is The *"Mu'ez"* and The *Muze"*, which means "The One who gives Honor" and "The One who humiliates and brings low". An honorable person today might be a low person tomorrow, and a rich person today might be poor tomorrow, so don't go to another human being for **Honor**, go to Allah. Allah says, ***"Say: 'O Allah. Lord of Power (And Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please: You endue with honor whom You please, and You bring low whom You please: In Your hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power.'" (3:26).***

Allah refuses that any of His servants be humiliated or express humility except in two cases:
1) Humiliating oneself in front of Allah (see Step 1: Humbleness & Humility in front of Allah).
2) Humility to ones parents. Allah says, ***"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'" (17:24).***

There is a third situation when Allah accepts that a Muslim expresses humility. But the humility in this case is not the humility that implies passiveness and loss of dignity but rather implies mutual mercy and humbleness. Allah says, ***"...Soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him,- lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters."*** (5:54). Therefore, our relationship with our fellow Muslim brothers and sisters should be a relationship of mutual respect mercy and humbleness.

How do we become humiliated in this world?

Four things lead us to the lowliness of humiliation and weakness and loss of respect:

1) Obeying Shaytan (Satan). Shaytan wants to humiliate us and he clearly expressed this intention. Allah says, ***"He (Shaytan) said: 'Do you see? This is the one whom You hast honored above me (Adam)! If You will but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway - all but a few!'" (17:62).*** The word in Arabic that Shaytan used to describe what he will do to us was *"la-ahtanekanna"* this word describes a position in which one person is pulling an animal by a rope that is tied or fixed to the animal's mouth. So Shaytan wants to pull us this way, which is extremely humiliating when you think about it. If you obey Shaytan, then you are approaching this image and the signs of humility will start to appear on you.

2) Following your desires. If you always follow your desires you are steadily approaching weakness and lowliness. This is one of the wisdoms of fasting in Ramadan. Ramadan is a time when you tell your inner desires "I'm in control! Not you". The desire to eat and drink is an example of our inner desires and fasting Ramadan teaches us how to tame them.

3) Becoming numb towards Allah, Islam, and your Ummah. When that happens, you loose your sense of belonging to something great, and you will search for another identity. This search for an alternative identity to Islam leads to a sense of lowliness and humiliation.

4) Loosing confidence in Allah and that everything has been decreed by Him. Constant fear of the future makes a person loose his sense of **Honor** and **Dignity**. Imam Ali (rAa) once said, "Why should I ever fear death? If today is not the day during which Allah had decreed that I should die, then why should I worry? And if it is the day, then fearing it will certainly not change what Allah had decreed."

Think about yourself, do you have any of the previous four? If you do, you must change, or else you will lead yourself to humiliation and those around you will humiliate you.

History tells us that there was a time when Muslims reached a very a severe level of humility and lowliness, when the Tatars sacked Baghdad. Its said that a woman would come

to a dozen Muslim men and tell them "Look, I don't have a sword to kill you all, so all of you go face that wall until I bring one." Yes, they actually obeyed her and waited for her to bring a sword and kill them all.

Compare these men to Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa). Omar ibn Al-Khattab was a great example for those who want to see the *'Ezzah* of a Muslim. Until the sixth year after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) started conveying the Message of Islam, the Muslims were always meeting in secrecy out of fear from the non-Believers' oppression. In such an atmosphere, Omar embraced Islam. The minute after he became a Muslim he asked Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), "O Messenger of Allah, aren't we right?" the Prophet (pbuh) replied with yes. Omar then asked, "And aren't they (non-Believers) wrong?" the Prophet replied again with yes. Then Omar asked, "Then why are we hiding??" The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) asked him, "What do you think we should do?" Omar replied, "I say we walk out of this house! March in the streets, and yell '*Allahu Akbar!*' (God is Greatest), and march around the Ka'ba so that all of them see us!!" And that was exactly what they did, and not a single non-Believer could do a thing about it! Ever since, things started to change for the Muslims, for they now had Omar on their side.

The same thing happened when the migration to Medina started. Most of the Muslims left Mecca silently and secretly, but Omar (rAa) just couldn't do so. He put on his arms and then he went to the Ka'ba and prayed. The chiefs of Mecca looked at him in silence. After the prayer, he told them, "I am leaving for Medina. If anyone wants his child to become an orphan, wife to become a widow, or his mother to weep him in sorrow, then let him follow me across this valley!!" Of course, no body moved.

When the Muslims opened Jerusalem, the Christians refused to give the keys of the city except to Omar in person (the Caliph at that time). So Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) set off from Medina to Jerusalem. Omar had only one attendant with him and only one camel to ride and they rode it by turns. It happened to be the servant's turn to ride on the day when they were to reach Jerusalem. "Commander of the Faithful," said the attendant, "I give up my turn. It will look awkward, in the eyes of the people, if I ride and you lead the camel." "Oh no," replied Omar, "I am not going to be unjust. The honor of Islam is enough for us all." (Notice how Omar is developing the servant's sense of *self-honor* the way Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did with Ibn Abbas?)

While walking, Omar had to cross a muddy area and so he took off his footwear and put it under his arm and raised his clothes so that it wouldn't get muddy. When Abu Obayda (one of the commanders waiting for Omar) saw this, he ran to Omar asking him to ride the camel while entering the city. Abu Obayda also expressed his concern about the outer appearance of Omar, for they were in a land where the quality of clothes reflected the rank of people. Omar replied with a sigh, "Abu Obayda, let someone other than you say that. Have you forgotten that we were a low people and it was Islam that made us honorable? If we seek Honor from anything other than Islam, Allah will return us back again to that state of lowliness."

Another example of *honor* and *dignity* was given by one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his name was Rab'ia ibn Amer (rAa). The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) sent him with a message to Rostrum the famous Persian General. Rostrum wanted to dazzle Rab'ia and so he covered the desert sand leading to his Royal tent with precious silk Persian carpets and made hundreds of beautiful Persian women stand in two lines on both sides of the road leading to his tent. Rab'ia got off of his horse and started to march confidently towards the tent stabbing holes in the carpets with his spear with every step, he didn't even look at the women around him. Rostrum was disturbed by this and asked Rab'ia what he wanted. Rab'ia confidently replied, "We have come to take mankind from the darkness to the light and from the worship of the false gods to the worship of Allah, from the narrowness of this world to the wide expanse of this world and the next, and from the injustices of man made religions to the justice of Islam." The *honor* and *dignity* that Islam planted in Rab'ia's heart gave him the power to stand in front of Rostrum and say what he said.

I don't want our Muslim sisters to think that all the examples for **dignity** and **honor** are related to men only. Asmaa bint Abi Bakr taught all Muslims how one should stand up for his or her beliefs. Abdullah ibn Az-Zubayr (her son) was running for the Caliphate after the death of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. The Hijaz, Egypt, Iraq, Khurasan and much of Syria were favorable to him and acknowledged him as the Caliph. The Umayyads however continued to contest the Caliphate and to field a massive army under the command of Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf Ath-Thaqafi. Relentless battles were fought between the two sides during which Abdullah ibn Az-Zubayr displayed great acts of courage and heroism. Many of his supporters however could not withstand the continuous strain of battle and gradually began to desert him. Finally he sought refuge in the Sacred Mosque at Mecca. It was then that he went to his mother, now an old blind woman. He expressed to her his fear of the current situation and how everyone was deserting him and whether she thought he should hand himself in to the Umayyads. Asmaa (rAa) replied strongly, "It's your affair, Abdullah, and you know yourself better. If however you think that you are right and that you are standing up for the Truth then persevere and fight on as your companions who were killed under your flag had shown perseverance. If however you desire the world, what a miserable wretch you are. You would have destroyed yourself and you would have destroyed your men."

Abdullah told her that he isn't fearing death, but he fears that they will mutilate his body after they kill him. His mother told him, "There is nothing after death that man should be afraid of. Skinning does not cause any pain to the slaughtered sheep." See how she encouraged her son to stand with **honor** and **dignity** for what he sees is right? When Abdullah heard that his face lightened and he said, "What a blessed mother! Blessed be your noble qualities! I have come to you at this hour to hear what I have heard." He hugged his mother, but while Asmaa wrapped her arms around her son's body she felt something hard under his shirt so she asked him what it was and he told her that it was his armor. Asmaa said, "This, my son, is not the dress of one who desires martyrdom. Take it off. That will make your movements lighter and quicker. Wear instead the *sirwal* (a long under garment) so that if you are killed, your private parts would not be exposed." He went out and fought and was killed. Al-Hajjaj hung his body on a cross waiting for Asmaa to come and beg him to take her son's body down but she didn't. Al-Hajjaj now furious went to her trying to provoke her saying, "See what your son did? See what he made me do to him?" But this **honorable** woman stood up to Al-Hajjaj and replied, "By Allah, I only see that you have ruined his life, and he has ruined your After-life!" Al-Hajjaj was a name that when heard would make strong men faint from fear. But Asmaa bint Abi Bakr stood strongly in front of him, she stood with **'Ezzah**.

This was how Muslims felt. **Honor** and **dignity** were embedded in their hearts. And we all know about the Muslim woman who was slapped in the land of the Romans and who cried her historical cry, "O Mu'tasim!" Every Muslim at that time felt that he or she had an identity and **dignity**. The Caliph Al-Mu'tasim heard about her cry and said, "Here I am, O sister", and sent his soldiers to attack the Romans in the famous battle of 'Amouriyah. When the honor of one single woman was endangered, the Muslim army moved to rescue her... (*Sigh*) look at us today, and look how many of our women were killed and raped, and look at how we respond. We need our **Honor** and **Dignity** back! We need our **Might** and **Glory** back! We need our **'Ezzah**!! And we could only get it from Allah, so lets flee back to Allah!

Its interesting to find in the Quran that **'Ezzah** is frequently coupled with Wisdom or Mercy. That's because Allah wants to teach us that **Honor**, **Glory** and **Might** should not mean transgressing or being irrational and violent, but instead a feeling of **self-honor** and **dignity** enveloped with **mercy**, **wisdom** and **good behavior**.

Finally, I would like to finish this lecture with a Hadith that sends shivers through my body. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "**Whoever allowed a Muslim to be humiliated while he could assist him, Allah will humiliate him in front of the entire creation on the Day of Judgment**". Lets do our best to lift the humiliation from above our brothers and sisters in Palestine and Iraq and our entire Ummah. Lets change our personal condition towards **Honor** and **Dignity**, because unless we change our own condition, Allah will not change the condition of our Ummah.

Step 10: Repentance (Tawbah)

Law Number Ten: [We all need to repent and unless we do, our situation won't change](#)

In this chapter I would like to talk about an important step that we have to take and make sure we realize its importance and not take it lightly. In this chapter I will talk about the importance of [Repenting](#) to Allah from our sins. The reason I'm emphasizing this is because I received a phone call from young man. He was crying on the phone and he told me that he is sure that what is happening in Iraq is because of his enormous sins. Do you think that this is not possible, that the sins of a Muslim in West Africa could cause a Muslim in Eastern Europe to be driven out of his home and killed? It could happen, because we are one Ummah, one body, and if one part is in pain, the whole body aches.

Let me give you a real example. There was a time when the Children of Israel suffered from a terrible drought to the extent that their plants and animals started to die from thirst. They went to Prophet Moses (pbuh) and asked him to pray to Allah to send them rain. So Prophet Moses (pbuh) started to pray to Allah and continued to do so for a very long time during which he expressed sincere devotion and humbleness, but still there was no rain. When Moses (pbuh) asked Allah why He isn't answering his prayers, Allah told him that there was a man amongst them that has been insisting on disobeying Him for the past 40 years, and for that reason, He won't answer the prayer until that man leaves them. So Moses (pbuh) turned to his people and told them that whoever has been insisting on disobeying Allah for the past 40 years must leave because his disobedience is the reason Allah is depriving them from rain, but no one stepped out. While Moses (pbuh) was repeating this, the guilty man realized that he was in a very difficult situation, so he started praying to Allah saying, "Oh Allah, if I step out, everyone will know that I was the one that has been disobeying you, and it will be humiliating for me. But at the same time if I don't step out, we will all die from thirst. Please Allah forgive me and get me out of this situation, please Allah, accept my [repentance](#)." Then all of the sudden it started to rain, so Moses (pbuh) asked Allah why it was raining even though the man didn't step out. Allah told him that he had [repented](#) and that his [repentance](#) was accepted. When Moses (pbuh) asked Allah to tell him who the man was, Allah replied "O Moses, I didn't expose him when he was disobeying me, would I expose him now that he has repented?"

See dear brothers and sisters, our sins could cause our suffering, and [repenting](#) could be the way out. Lets Repent to Allah! Lets make tonight, a night of [repentance](#). Why not? Are you perfect and don't need to [repent](#) to Allah? No sins here or there? Come on, we all need to [repent](#) to Allah from our wrongdoings. We need to [repent](#) to Allah because we haven't been doing a good job inviting other people to Islam. What about our Muslim brothers and sisters in non-Muslim countries, are they giving a good example of a Muslim? Are you making people admire Islam or are you doing otherwise? We need to repent to Allah for not introducing our religion to others in the best manner. Don't think that this isn't important, it's very important. Maybe such behavior on our behalf is a fundamental reason behind our current situation. Do you realize the importance of inviting to the path to Allah? Why don't you carry it out? Being shy isn't an excuse. We are talking about rescuing non-Believers from the darkness of non-belief, and rescuing our Muslim brothers and sisters from the consequences of their passiveness. Allah describes such an attitude saying: ***"O you who believe! what is the matter with you, that, when you are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter."*** (9:38). We need to [repent](#) from not taking da'wah seriously.

One might think that he or she is living a straight life with nothing really "off course" and that they haven't sinned so bad to [repent](#) to Allah. Lets make a little comparison. Who would you consider to be better Muslims, us today, or the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that lived with him? The Companions, right? Listen to what Allah told them in the Quran, ***"And O you Believers! turn you all together towards Allah (in repentance), that you may attain Bliss."*** (24:31). If the Companions were ordered by Allah to [repent](#), then

what about us? Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself when sitting with his companions used to ask Allah for forgiveness over 70 times. 70 times when just sitting with his companions! The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "O people! Turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness, for surely I make repentance a hundred times every day." And he is the Messenger of Allah! Then how many times should we ask Allah for his forgiveness?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we all need to [repent](#) to Allah. Are you afraid that you've been too bad to deserve Allah's forgiveness? Listen to your Merciful Lord, "**Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'**" (39:53). What keeps you from [repenting](#)? Are you going to go to bed tonight without asking for Allah for forgiveness? Could you really do that? We need all Muslims to clean their slate. We need it for each one's sake and for the sake of our Ummah. Don't underestimate your small sins, they really do much harm, and as one of the scholars said, "Do not look at the insignificance of your sins, but consider the greatness of The One you are disobeying."

Imagine if you lost everything you ever possessed and then try to imagine your joy if you were to suddenly retrieve everything after losing all hope of recovering what you had lost. Then think that Allah's delight is even greater than this when His slave [repents](#) to Him. So much so, that if mankind stopped repenting to Allah, He would replace us with another creation that would turn to Him for forgiveness. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "If you did not commit sins, Allah would wipe you out of existence and replace you by another people who would commit sins, ask for Allah's forgiveness and He would forgive them." What are we waiting for? And how can we not love Allah? Do you want to love Him more? Listen to what He says, "O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it."

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Verily, Allah extends His Hand out at night in order to accept the repentance of the sinner by day. And He extends His Hand during the day in order to accept the repentance of the sinner by night." Don't prevent yourself from indulging in such Mercy. Don't waste another second away from Allah's forgiveness. [Repent](#) to Allah now!

[How to repent](#)

Three things must be fulfilled in order to [repent](#):

- 1- Regret doing the sin
- 2- Stop doing it
- 3- Insist on not doing it in the future

[Repentance](#) is an important step in order for us to change so that Allah may change our Ummah to the best. I hope we all [repent](#) to Allah from our sins tonight, we need it, and our whole Ummah needs it too.

Step 11: Investing Time

Law Number Eleven: [Muslims must value time](#)

What made Usama ibn Zayd qualified enough to lead the Muslim Army when he was 16 years old? What made Muhammad Al-Fateh (Mehmet) lead the Muslim Army and open Constantinople when he was only 23 years old and after 8 centuries of previous attempts by Muslims? Salahuddin (Saladin) started seriously practicing Islam when he was 30 years old and died when he was 56. How did he, within 26 years change his own self, as well as the whole Ummah, defeating the Crusaders, liberating Jerusalem and strengthening the Muslims once again? Dhul-Jawshan Ad-dababi was a companion that embraced Islam when he was 16 and died when he was 23. When he died, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was so impressed by him he insisted on digging his grave and burying him himself. After only 6 years of being a Muslim he elevated so high in the sight of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that he deserved such an honor after he died. How did all these people make such enormous achievements in such a short period of time? They valued "time" and never wasted it.

Is time really important from the Islamic perspective? Certainly! In the Quran, Allah never swears an oath by anything unless it's extremely precious. Listen to what Allah says, ***"I swear by the break of Day; and the ten nights; By the even and odd (contrasted); And by the night when it departs; There surely is an oath for thinking man." (89:1-5).*** ***"I swear by the Time" (103:1).*** ***"I swear by the early hours of the day; And the night when it covers with darkness" (93:1-2).***

All these verses show that Allah considers time to be so precious that He swears oaths by them. Not only that, but look at our religion, time plays a fundamental role in it. We pray five times a day, do we pray the five prayers whenever we feel like it? No, but there are certain times for each prayer and these times are linked to sunrise, sunset, noon etc. its teaching us how to take time into consideration instead of just living your life regardless to whether its day or night. Ramadan is a month that begins and ends by the appearance of the crescent, and within the month we fast and break our fast according to time. Hajj is preformed at a certain time and during Hajj you have to perform all the rituals within a certain window of time. Another example is Zakah, you pay a certain percentage of your annual savings once a year. This is how "time" has to do with everything we do in Islam. Muslims should be the most people to value time and invest it well. Ibn Masood (rAa) said, "I never regretted anything as much as I regretted a day I lost without being productive". Your time is your capital. Imagine if your capital was a million dollars, and then you stood in front of the ocean and threw the one million dollars in the air. The same thing applies to wasting your time; you are in fact wasting your capital. Time, is the cheapest thing for ignorant people, but the most precious for those who have wisdom. Be one of those people who value time.

Lets see some examples of people that don't value time. Muslims that spend their day on cafes playing dominos or cards or wasting all of their time in front of computer games or TV. Muslims that could actually sleep 12 hours a day, and when you ask any of them why they are doing that, they reply, "I'm killing time". The truth is, they are killing themselves. Really, wasting ones time is slow suicide. Not only are they killing their own self, but because they are part of a bigger picture, they are killing the Ummah as well. Each one of us is part of a whole body, if half the Muslim youth are wasting their time, its like the Ummah is breathing with a third of its lungs, or living with half of its heart. Therefore on the Day of Judgment you will be held account for the harm you've made to the entire Ummah. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, ***"No man shall witness the Day of Judgment without being asked about four: His life and how he spent his time, his youth and how he took advantage of it, his knowledge and how he disposed of, and his money, from where he had earned and for what he had spent it."*** Not only will you be asked about your life, but also there is a second question, which is more specific, about your youth. Do you know how you will be asked about the time you spent in this life? Every single breath you took, what did you do during it? Imagine your life, as a long

strip of film and every breath is a snap shot. One by one you will go through them. Live your life so that on that day you would have something you'd feel proud to show.

Some people when they die, History considers them as zeros and they aren't even acknowledged. They were zeros when they were alive and they remain so after they die. Other people live and die leaving a legacy behind, and History celebrates them for centuries to come. Imam An-Nawawi was an example of such people. He died at the age of 40 and wrote 50 major books during his last 15 years. He died as a bachelor, because he had no time to get married. He established an education system for people of all intellectual levels. The 50 books he wrote are categorized into levels; first level is for beginners (i.e. The Forty An-Nawawi Hadiths), second for intermediates (Riyadus Saliheen), and the third level is for experts (Explanation of Saheeh Muslim). He died hundreds of years ago but until this day, his books like Riyadus Saliheen are found in almost every Islamic library and bookstore. He started writing when he was 25 years old and died when he was forty. During fifteen years he wrote all these books. Ibn Al-Jawzi did even more, throughout his life he wrote over a thousand books. Can you believe that?? These are not imaginary people, these are Muslims that valued **time** and didn't waste a second. When a friend of Ibn Al-Jawzi stopped him and asked him to come and chitchat with him for a while he replied, "Only if you could stop **time**". Compare these glowing examples with other Muslims whom when asked what they did in the past nine or ten years don't have anything to say. They live zeros and die zeros and are resurrected as zeros. We all suffer from this problem, wasting **time**, including myself, and we all need to do something about it. The biggest act of treason a Muslim could do to this Ummah is wasting his or her own **time**.

Wasting **time** comes in other forms as well. For example, not praying for 20 or 30 years and then when you're in your 40's you look back with sorrow and wish that you'd started praying long ago. Or delaying wearing the Hijab, and when you're married or when you grow old you will look back and say "If only I did it earlier, I've wasted so much **time**". Another form of wasting time is what we have all done, if only we didn't take so much **time** to wake up and realize that we are in trouble and we need to change our situation, what took us so long? Procrastination. If only we started waking up and waking our friends up earlier.

Race **time**! Compete with it!! This is what Allah teaches us in the Quran. Allah says, **"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." (3:133).**

"It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them" (23:61).

When Omar ibn Al-Khattab was a Caliph he once asked, "When could I sleep?? If I sleep during the night, I will not fulfill my duties towards my Lord, and if I sleep during the day, I will not fulfill my duties towards my people!" Compare this to Muslims that sleep most of the day. I have an idea! Lets try and do this. How about gradually decreasing the numbers of hours you sleep until they reach 6 hours. For example if you sleep 8 hours a day, try to gradually decrease them to 6 hours, which means that you will save two extra hours. Do you know what this would mean? It would mean that after forty years, you would have saved around 4 years of your life. Can you imagine what you could do during these four years? You could memorize the Quran or perform graduate studies... you could do lots of things!

Lets imagine how much **time** we waste. Lets calculate it. 24 hours in one day, 8 of them lost in sleep, and another 8 lost in daily routines like eating, drinking, bathroom, talking etc. This means that you have only one third of your life remaining to actually do something, please don't waste them.

Why are we mentioning this right now? Because Allah told us that we must change ourselves and one of the things we really need to change is the way we use our time. Our Ummah needs Muslims that don't waste **time**. **Time** my dear brothers and sisters, **time**! We need to feel how precious our **time** is. Lets do that. Lets change, because... **"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves" (13:11).**

Step 12: Being Proud of Martyrdom

Law Number Twelve: [Martyrdom is an honor and Islam is more precious than our lives](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many Muslims are dying in Iraq and Palestine. Every day in the news, another dead body, another funeral. In the newspapers, 5 killed, 4 dead etc. I thought to myself, "why are we using the words 'dead' and 'killed', what ever happened to the prestigious word '**Martyred**'?" The **martyrs** are great people from our Ummah. We should envy them for the reward they are blessed with. Of course we are human, and we weep when we realize that they won't be with us any more, but we must not forget the joy they themselves are experiencing while we are grieving. They are **Martyrs**!

Unfortunately, nowadays we react to Martyrdom in a very strange manner. Ask any Muslim mother, "Would you like your son or daughter to die as a **Martyr**?" She will probably scream, "What?!! My Son?!! NO WAY!! May Allah never make that happen!" What happened to us? Have we forgotten what the word Martyrdom means? Fearing death is a huge obstacle facing the revival of our Ummah.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "The nations are about to call each other and set upon you, just as diners set upon food." It was said, "Will it be because of our small number that day?" He said, "Rather, on that day you will be many, but you will be like the foam on the river. And Allah will remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and will throw *wahn* into your hearts." Someone said, "O Messenger of Allah! What is Wahn?" He said, "Love of the world and the hatred for death".

Why do we fear death so much when it will certainly happen to all of us? Allah said to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the Quran, "**Truly you will die (one day) and truly they (too) will die (one day)**" (39:30). You will die anyway, so why not ask Allah that you die in the best manner possible? And does anyone have doubt that **martyrdom** is the best way to die?

The word **Martyr** in Arabic is "*Shaheed*", and this word implies some kind of witnessing. The word for **Martyrdom** is "*Shahadah*", a word that should be familiar to every Muslim because when you enter Islam you have to say the Shahadah which is the Testimony of Faith: "I bear witness that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of Allah". So what's the link between **Martyrdom** and this Testimony of Faith? Each one of us made this Testimony by tongue, but the **Shaheed**, not only did it by tongue, but proved it with his or her own life and blood, they gave their lives to show that they believe in this Testimony of Faith. It's the highest level of witnessing the Oneness of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). It's also said that the word "**Shaheed**" implies that they will bear witness against us on the Day of Judgment. They will say, "We gave our lives for Islam, what did you give?" It's a deep word, and it's an honor.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Any servant (of Allah) who dies and has been bestowed good from Allah, does not wish to return to the World, even if he is given the World and what it contains; except a Shaheed, due to what he sees from the virtues of Shahadah (Martyrdom). So that he may be killed ten times due to what he receives from the honor." He (pbuh) also said, "By the One in Whose Hand is my soul (Allah), I wish that I could fight for the sake of Allah, and get killed, then come back to life, and get killed again for the sake of Allah, then come back to life, and get killed for the sake of Allah..." This is our beloved Prophet (pbuh), expressing how much he values dying in the Path of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah said, "By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, no one is injured in the Path of Allah - and Allah knows best who is truly wounded in His Path - except that he comes (with his wound) on the Day of Resurrection, its color the color of blood, and its scent that of musk."

Martyrs are granted six special favors from Allah, they will be:

- 1- Forgiven their sins with the first drop of his blood.
- 2- Saved from the punishment of the grave.
- 3- Will be protected from the great fear of the Day of Judgment.
- 4- Given the Crown of Honor, one jewel of which is better than the whole world and what it contains.
- 5- Able to intercede for seventy members of his family.
- 6- Married to seventy-two of the *Hoor al-`Ain*.

We must be proud of our brothers and sisters that were blessed with the [Shahadah](#)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "When your brothers were killed at Uhud, Allah placed their souls in the hearts of green birds. They frequent the rivers of Paradise, and eat from its fruits, then return to the lanterns under the Throne. When they enjoy the good in their food and drink, and their excellent speech, they say, "We wish that our brothers knew what Allah has prepared for us, so that they will never abstain from Jihad, nor will they refrain from war" So Allah said, "I will inform them of you." So Allah revealed these verses to His Messenger: **"Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. No, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord." (3:169).**

Not only that, but the [Shaheed](#) doesn't even feel any pain when dying, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "The Shaheed does not feel (any pain) from killing, except as one of you feels the prick of a needle." So if you wish a painless death you should never fear [Martyrdom](#), in fact, its something to aspire to.

Something else that is important to remember is that no one dies by chance and that death isn't a random process. [Martyrdom](#) as a way of dying is an honor bestowed by Allah to whom He chooses based on a person's sincerity and devotion. That's why Allah said in the Quran, **"And that He (Allah) may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witnesses (to Truth)" (3:140).** It's as if Allah is selecting certain people for this honor. It's a blessing that Allah gives to whom He wills.

One of the companions once said that during one of the battles he was hoping to die as a [Shaheed](#), so he searched for the hottest spot in the battlefield where being [martyred](#) is most probable. He said, "I saw lots of arrows being directed to my brothers on my right so I rushed to the area, but I wasn't hit... then I saw a lot of arrows being shot towards my brothers on my left and they were falling one after the other so I rushed there, but still, I wasn't hit." Allah didn't bestow on him the honor of [Shahadah](#) and so no matter how hard he tried, he didn't achieve it.

Khalid ibn Al-Waleed (rAa) was a great Muslim military genius and Commander. So great that Abu Bakr (rAa), the closet friend to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said about him, "Women will no longer be able to give birth to the likes of Khalid ibn Al-Waleed." Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) also said, "Have women ever stopped mourning for anyone like Khalid?" For short, Khalid was phenomenal. Yet, despite the enormous number of battles he fought, he died on his bed. He said, "I have sought [martyrdom](#) in a hundred battles. And now I die even as a camel dies. I die in bed, in shame. May the eyes of cowards never find rest." [Martyrdom](#) is not determined by the number of battles you fight, but by Allah's will to bestow it upon you.

The First Martyr in Islam...

Imagine how honorable it would be to be the first **martyr** in Islam. Who had such an honor? She was a woman, and her name was Sumaya. Sumaya (rAa) was a poor, old and weak woman but her persistence and firmness of faith aggravated Abu Lahab, who was continuously torturing her so that she would leave Islam. When Abu Lahab couldn't tolerate it anymore, he killed her by stabbing her with a spear in her private area. Sumaya is the first name in the golden series of **martyrs** in Islam.

Another name in the golden series is Abdullah ibn Hiram (rAa). During the battle of Uhud, Abdullah and his son, Jaber, both wanted to participate, but only one of them could do so because someone had to stay and take care of Abdullah's nine daughters. So they cast lots to see who will go and Abdullah won. Jaber started to weep out of sorrow for not being able to participate, so his father said, "O my son, if it were anything other than Paradise, I would have let you go instead." Abdullah was martyred that day, and when Jaber went to the battlefield to see his body, the companions tried to prevent him because his father's body was mutilated. When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) saw his persistence he told them to let him pass and see the body. Jaber was devastated by the scene and kept on hiding his eyes behind his arm and peaking at the body, only to cry even more because of the damage made to his father's face. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) went to him and said, "Weep him or don't weep him, it won't make a difference, for the Angels are still shading him with their wings." Moments later Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) rushed to him saying, "Brighten up Jaber!! Allah has never Spoken to a person except from behind a veil, but He has spoken to your father directly and asked him to wish for anything. Your father asked Allah to allow him to come back to this world so that he could die again as a martyr, but Allah told Him that He had decreed that once a person is dead, he or she shall never return. So your father asked Allah to let his brothers know what pleasure he is experiencing, and Allah has just revealed: **"Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. No, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord; They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve."** (3:169-170)."

When Sa'd ibn Abi-Waqas was leading the Muslim Army to open Iraq and was gathering contributions from the Muslims, a poor woman came to him and said, "O Sa'd, I'm a poor woman and I have nothing to give except my hair braid, so tie it to your horse rein so that I would have participated in the battle." Sa'd been impressed, accepted her hair braid. A while later a little boy came to him expressing desire to join the army, but Sa'd refused because he was too young. The boy replied, "Sa'd! Its none your business, its a matter between Allah and I!" Surprised by his insistence, Sa'd let him join the army. While camping one night before the battle the boy came to Sa'd and said, "Sa'd! I had a dream that I was walking in a huge palace." Sa'd replied, "My son, I think that its **martyrdom!**" The boy said, "Then farewell Sa'd, and please extend my regards to my mother." Sa'd asked, "And how do I know your mother?" The boy replied, "She's the one that gave you the braid!" And the little boy was blessed with **martyrdom!**

Dear brothers and sisters, the golden list of **Martyrs** is very long, and is still to be extended even more. Not everyone will have the privilege of dying as a **Shaheed**, but if you have a sincere intention, then there is good news for you. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that if someone sincerely asks Allah for **Martyrdom**, Allah would raise him or her to the levels of the **Martyrs**, even if they die on their bed. Seeking **martyrdom** with sincerity means making preparation for it as Allah says, **"If they really intended to go out (in Jihad) they would have made some preparation"** (9:46).

Lets pray to Allah to accept our **Martyrs** and to bestow such an honor upon us. Willing to sacrifice ones life for the sake of Allah is essential for our Ummah to get up once again. So lets change our view of **martyrdom** to one of pride and aspiration, because unless we change our own condition, Allah will not change our Ummah's.

Step 13: Persistence (1 of 3)

One of our big problems as an Ummah is that we get angry, we get motivated to change, we say, "This must end!!".... And then a couple of days later.... we start to cool down and forget. This also happens on an individual level. Some of us used to wake up to pray Fajr and was very happy doing it. Then a month later, he or she stops and prefers the warmth of the bed. Or take another example, our sisters. When Ramadan comes they are so excited to wear the Hijab, but as soon as it's over, they take the Hijab off. Why? Why can't we be firmer and more [persistent](#)? We are cooling down, even though the dangers falling upon our Ummah are heating up!!

You know, our enemies understood this "Modern Muslim Character" and they use it for their interest. When they do something that we revolt against, they take into consideration that they must be patient enough to absorb the first thrust of our reaction, knowing that its just a matter of weeks and we will forget about it and they could complete doing what ever they want to do. We are not supposed to be like that. We should have more [persistence](#) and must stop giving up so easily.

What are the reasons that make us cool down so quickly? Everyday distracting life issues, our children, our studies, jobs, and other things.... all these make us forget and cool down when it comes to our Ummah. Can't we stay hot and continuously [persistent](#) forever? No, because we are human, cooling down is a natural response. We start to get habituated... But today, Muslims are cooling down too quickly!! This pace isn't normal! Our [persistence](#) is too weak, weaker than normal, and we have to do something about it! The percentage of those who cool down so quickly must decrease. We need people that will remain [persistent](#) until the day they die. We need them to keep the issue alive in our hearts! I know that not everyone can do that, but we need some people who can. Why can't it be you? And you my sister, why can't it be you? And you too... I know you're only 18, but you could be one of them too. The Companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were only 1% of the Arabian Peninsula, but their [Persistence](#) led them to success. Keep the goal clear and alive in your heart. Never forget the struggle of your Ummah.

What should we be [persistent](#) for?

We need [persistence](#) for 3 different things, which is why I will divide this topic into 3 parts.

- 1- [Persistence](#) in seeking Truth and achieving Justice. This doesn't mean that you should be hardheaded and stubborn without a speck of flexibility. I say this because some young Muslims after hearing this might refuse any sort of compromising in any issue, which isn't always the best way to deal with things. But at the same time when it comes to clear truth, there should never be compromises.... I won't accept a bribe means I won't accept a bribe. I will obey Allah and wear the Hijab means that I will wear the Hijab. I will pray five times a day means that I will pray five times a day. An obligation is an obligation.
- 2- [Persistence](#) in seeking victory for our Ummah and Islam.
- 3- [Persistence](#) in obeying Allah (swt).

We will address each one of them in a separate chapter in shaa Allah.

1- [Persistence](#) in seeking Truth and achieving Justice

Is it the truth? Is it right? Then hold on to it with your hands and teeth and never let go. I was very moved by the 23 year old American woman Rachel Corrie, she stood in front of an Israeli bulldozer that wanted to destroy a Palestinian home. She stood firm in her place and the bulldozer kept on advancing. The bulldozer ran over her, crushing her, and Rachel died. Why did she do that? Because she believed that it was the truth She believed that it was right, and she was [persistent](#). (*Sigh*) We have many Muslim men that don't have the same [persistence](#) for what's right. That's why I will tell you today about three situations in our

Islamic History. Three situations that demonstrate how Muslims stood [persistently](#) in front of falsehood.

The first situation is the one of Imam Ahmed ibn Hambal. What can I say about Imam Ahmed ibn Hambal?? During the lifetime of this great Imam, some Muslim Philosophers came out with a new false concept concerning the Quran, which contradicts with the original Islamic belief. The Caliph embraced this new concept and all of the Ummah was required to believe in it. Imam Ahmed ibn Hambal knew that this concept was false and contradicted with the original Islamic belief so he stood firm against it, and he was the only scholar in the entire Ummah that publicly opposed this alien concept. The Caliph arrested him and ordered that he be tortured until he changes his mind. While in the prison Imam Ahmed said, "By Allah, I don't fear imprisonment, for my humble house and this prison are alike. Neither do I fear death, for it is only the honor of martyrdom. All I fear, is the whip! I fear that I won't be able to stand it." A famous pocket picker named Abu Haytham Attayar (the flying thief) with him in the prison heard him and said, "O Imam!! I have been whipped 18000 lashes throughout my criminal career and I was [persistent](#), though I was on the side of falsehood. So be even more [persistent](#) Imam, because you are on the side of Truth! Imam, its just the first two whips that hurt, after that you loose your senses and don't know if you're being whipped or not! Imam!! Be [persistent](#)!! For if you live, you will live honorable, and if you die, you will be a martyr!!" These words gave the Imam [persistence](#) and helped him stand firm in front of all the torture. The man that was whipping the Imam later said, "I whipped the Imam so hard, if it were an elephant, it would have collapsed! His back became ripped into shreds because of the whipping I thought that the next lash would cross though his back and come out of his mouth." Can you imagine what the Imam when through?? But because he knew he was on the right side, he stood firm. He didn't weaken and give up. In shaa Allah we won't have to go through all this, but such a situation should give you [persistence](#), that's what we need today, [persistence](#).

The second situation is that of Omar Al-Mukhtar. I won't go through the details, I'm sure most of us saw the movie, but I will focus on what happened when Omar Al-Mukhtar was standing in front of the Italian Military court during his trial when he was 73 years old.

Judge: Did you fight against the Italian Empire?

Omar: Yes.

Judge: Did you encourage others to fight us?

Omar: Yes.

Judge: Do you know the punishment of such an act?

Omar: Yes.

Judge: Do you admit that you did commit such an act?

Omar: Yes.

Judge: How long have you been fighting us?

Omar: 10 years.

Judge: Do you regret what you have done?

Omar: No.

Judge: Do you know that you will be executed?

Omar: Yes.

Judge: I feel sorry that your life will end like this.

Omar: This is the best possible way for me to end my life.

Judge: We've decided to grant you complete forgiveness, and you will be free, under the condition that you write to the Libyans to stop resisting us.

Omar: The finger I raise during my prayer to bear witness that there is No God except Allah, and Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of Allah, could never be used to write anything false... No!!

Omar Al-Mukhtar, the Lion of the Desert as they called him, was executed and he was a martyr!

I'm not telling you to prepare yourself to go through all this, but at least keep our struggle live in your heart. Our lack of [persistence](#) is a problem we need to solve. How can you remain [persistent](#) in your feelings toward Al-Aqsa mosque? Remember during the last Intifada when we were telling our sisters to make their dream that she will give birth to another Salahuddin... Has the dream been forgotten? Many people forgot it. We aren't even [persistent](#)

in our dreams! We have a problem here, and we need to solve it! You need to be firm on the level of worshipping you are trying to maintain. You need to be firm and **persistent** in refusing any forbidden relationship with the opposite sex. You need to be **persistent** in your search for good friends that will encourage you to be a better Muslim.

The last example we will show today is that of Sa'eed ibn Al-Jubayr in front of Al-Hajjaj. Al-Hajjaj was a tyrant Army Commander that killed many, many Muslims. Sa'eed ibn Al-Jubayr stood up against Al-Hajjaj opposing his cruelty. When Al-Hajjaj ordered that he be arrested, Sa'eed escaped but later was caught and brought in front of Al-Hajjaj. Listen to the conversation that went between them...

Hajjaj: What's your name? (Hajjaj knew his name but was mocking him)
Sa'eed: Sa'eed ibn Al-Jubayr (literately meaning Happy-one son of the Intact).
Hajjaj: In fact you are Miserable son of Shattered!!
Sa'eed: My mother knows best what my name is ever since she gave birth to me.
Hajjaj: May you and your mother both be miserable!!
Sa'eed: Only the inhabitants of the Hell Fire are miserable, so do you have knowledge of the unseen to say that I'm miserable?
Hajjaj: I will change your world into the Hell Fire!!
Sa'eed: If I knew you could do that, I would have worshiped you instead of Allah, but you can't.
Hajjaj: Then why did you escape from me??
Sa'eed: The same reason Prophet Moses (pbuh) escaped from the Pharaoh.
Hajjaj (Getting furious): Choose for yourself a way to die!!
Sa'eed: No, you choose for yourself a way to die, because however you kill me, Allah will kill you the same way.
Hajjaj: By Allah, I will kill you in a way I have never killed anyone before you, nor will I use to kill anyone after you!!
Sa'eed: Then you'll just ruin my life and I'll ruin your After Life.
Hajjaj: Take him away from here, kill him!!!
Sa'eed was dragged out, and he started to laugh
Hajjaj: WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING??!!!!
Sa'eed: I'm laughing at your arrogance in front of Allah, and His Patience with you!!
Hajjaj: Direct his face towards the Qibla (Ka'ba) and slaughter him like an animal!!!
Sa'eed: (He recited from the Quran) ***"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah."*** (6:79).
Hajjaj (furious): Direct his face anywhere else!!!
Sa'eed: (Reciting from the Quran) ***"To Allah belong the East and the West: Where ever you turn, there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing."*** (2:115).
Hajjaj (even more furious): Slam his face into the ground!! Let him face the ground!!!
Sa'eed: (Reciting from the Quran) ***"From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again."*** (20:55).
Hajjaj (going crazy): Kill him!!! Slaughter him!! His tongue is so quick with the Quran! Kill him!!
Sa'eed: I bear witness that there is no God except Allah, and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His servant and Messenger. Take it from me Hajjaj, take it from me until we meet on the Day of Judgement... O Allah, do not give him power over any human being after me.
And Sa'eed was killed, but something very strange happened afterwards. A week later Al-Hajjaj lost his mind, every night he would scream "Why did I ever harm Sa'eed??? Why did I ever harm Sa'eed??" And he never had power over anyone else, and he died just a week later.

Once again dear brothers and sisters, this won't happen to us in shaa Allah, but the reason I'm giving these examples is so that we could become stronger and more **persistent**. We need **persistent** Muslims. That's why I'm urging you... if everyone cooled down, you don't cool down! Stand firm! We need you! I also want to remind you to stay balanced. **Persistence** doesn't mean starting a fight, or offending those close to you, we need to be **persistent** and at the same time balanced. **Persistence**, we need it for our Ummah to get back up again...

Step 14: Persistence (2 of 3)

In this chapter we will continue to talk about **Persistence**, and we will focus on being **persistent** in serving Islam, **persistence** in our Faith. If the whole Ummah forgets about Islam, you don't forget. If all the people around you forget about Palestine and tell you that there is no solution to it, you don't forget and you remain **persistent**. If they tell you Baghdad has fallen and we can't do anything about it, remain **persistent**. We need Muslims that are like mountains! No matter what happens, they stand firm and strong! No matter how many earthquakes or storms, they won't fall, they won't fall except in front of Allah in humbleness and humility. Why? Why all this **persistence**? Because Islam is so, so precious, Islam deserves that we sacrifice our lives for it... that we dedicate our lives to it. This is today's take-home message: "I love Islam very much, I will persist in serving Islam, I will constantly remind my friends and encourage them to help one another become better Muslims, and I will continue to invite people to Islam in the best way possible."

Before any battle, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to tell the Companions a phrase or a motto that they would continue to repeat before and during the battle to keep them **persistent**. So for example, before the Battle of Uhud, this motto was: **"Your Religion, your religion, is your flesh and your blood!"** Can you feel it? Can you feel that Islam runs in your blood? Do you feel that if they took a sample of your blood and looked at it under the microscope they will find written on your blood cells **"I love Islam"**?

Are we going to remain **persistent** about Iraq? Or are we going to cool down the same way we cooled down about Palestine?

In the Quran, Allah reminds us of **persistence** and encourages us to stand firm. Allah says, **"O you who believe! When you meet a force, be firm, and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that you may prosper." (8:45)**. Our entire Ummah is meeting a force, its not just Iraq or Palestine, its the whole Ummah, therefore we all need to be firm the way Allah told us to.

Allah also says, **"How many of the prophets fought (in Allah's way), and with them (fought) Large bands of godly men? But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. And Allah Loves those who are firm and steadfast. All that they said was: "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything We may have done that transgressed our duty: Establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith." And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter. For Allah Loves those who do good." (3:146-148)**.

See how **persistent** they were and how Allah rewarded them? **"Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter."** Can you be like those men?

Listen to this verse, **"Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you": And frightened them: But it (only) increased their Faith: They said: "For us Allah is sufficient, and He is the best disposer of affairs." And they returned with Grace and bounty from Allah. no harm ever touched them: For they followed the good pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded" (3:173-174)**. They were **persistent**, and at the end, they weren't even harmed! See how Allah rewards the **persistent**? He gives them victory at the end. The verse right after is very interesting, it says, **" It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: So do not be afraid of them, and fear Me, if you have Faith." (3:175)**. Therefore, any sense of fear towards the enemy is only evil suggestions from Satan (Shaytan) so neglect them and stand firm and be persistent, you are on the side of truth! Why is Allah mentioning these verses to us in the Quran? Our Lord is encouraging us and telling us never to give up, He rewards those who are **persistent**.

If you are living just to eat, drink and have a family, you will live small and die small and your life will be meaningless. But if you live for Islam and die for Islam, you will live big, die big, and your life will have the best meaning ever, serving Allah's religion! So today I will tell you about some situations in our History to demonstrate to you people that were ready to sacrifice their life for Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said, "Among the people of long ago, there was a king who had a magician. He was getting old and said to the king: 'I am old, bring me a young man to whom I can teach my magic.' So, the king sent him a young man to teach. On the young man's way to the magician he met a monk. The young man sat and listened to him and was so happy with what he heard that he would stay a while with him, which made him late for his lesson, so the magician beat him. The young man complained to the monk who told him, 'When you are afraid of the magician, tell him, 'My people detained me, and when you are afraid of your people tell them the monk detained you.' This state of affairs continued until one day the young man came across a huge beast blocking the road. It blocked the road in a manner that no one could pass. The young man thought to himself, 'Now I can find out who is the superior, the magician or the monk.' So he picked up a stone and said, 'Lord, if the way of the monk is more pleasing to You than the way of the magician, cause the beast to die so that the people can pass.' Then he threw the stone at the beast and killed it and the people passed by. The young man told the monk what had happened and he said, 'Son, you have surpassed me, and I think that you have reached the stage where you might be harmed. Should this happen, do not disclose my whereabouts.' The young man began to cure people (by the permission of Allah) of blindness and leprosy and all manner of diseases. News of the miracles reached a blind courtier of the king, so he went to the young man with many gifts saying, 'All this will be yours if you can heal me.' The young man replied, 'I cannot help anyone. It is Allah who heals. If you testify your belief in Allah, I will pray for you and He will heal you.' So the blind man believed in Allah and Allah cured him of his blindness. After his sight had been restored, he went to the king and sat with him, as was his practice. The king asked, 'Who has restored your sight?' The man answered, 'My Lord.' The king asked, 'Have you a Lord other than me?' To this he replied, 'Allah is your Lord and my Lord.' Upon hearing this, the king ordered the man to be seized and tortured until he disclosed the name of the young man. The young man was brought before the king and the king said to him, 'Son, have you become so skilled in magic that you can heal the blind, lepers and other diseases?' The young man replied, 'I do not heal anyone, it is Allah who heals.' Then he too was seized and tortured until he revealed the whereabouts of the monk who was likewise summoned and ordered to recant his faith. He refused. The king sent for a saw, which was placed upon the monk's head, and he was sawn in half. Then, the king's courtier was sent for and he also was ordered to recant his faith. He refused, so he was also sawn in half. After this, the young man was brought forward and told to recant, but like the others he refused, so the king handed him over to his men and told them, 'Take him to such and such a mountain, if he still refuses to recant his faith, throw him from the top!' The king's men took him to the mountain and climbed to the top of it. There, the young man supplicated saying, 'Lord, save me from them in whatever way You will.' So the mountain shook and the men fell off. The young man returned to the king who asked, 'What has happened to your companions?' He answered, 'Allah has saved me from them.' So, he was handed over to another group of men who were told to take him in out in a big ship to the middle of the sea and if he still persisted in his refusal to abandon his faith to throw him into the sea. The king's men took him and he supplicated once again saying, 'Allah, save me from these people in whatever manner You will.' Then the boat sank and they were drowned, except the young man who returned to the king. The king asked, 'What has happened to your companions?' He replied, 'Allah has saved me from them' and added, 'you will be unable to kill me unless you do as I tell you.' The king asked, 'How is that?' The young man answered, 'Gather the people together in an open area and hang me from the trunk of a palm-tree. Then, take an arrow from my quiver, place it in the middle of a bow and say, 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of this young man,' and shoot it at me, if you do this, you will kill me.' The king did just that. The people were assembled in an open area and the young man was hanged from the trunk of a palm-tree. The king took an arrow from his quiver, placed it in the middle of the bow and said, 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of this young man,' and fired it. The arrow struck the young man in the middle of his forehead, who raised his hand to his forehead and died. Upon seeing this the people declared, 'We believe

in the Lord of this young man,' and the king was told, 'Look, that which you feared has happened, the people have believed!'"

Why did the boy go through all this? Why didn't he just escape after they failed to throw him off the mountain? He wanted the whole city to believe in Allah, and he was ready to be killed for it. He sacrificed his life for people to realize that there is no god except Allah. Alhamdulillah, none of us will have to go through this in shaa Allah, but such stories are supposed to give us a boost to be more [persistent](#). He was just a boy, and look how firm he was.

The second story is that of one of Prophet Muhammad's companions; Khubayb ibn Adiy (rAa). He was kidnapped by the Pagans of Mecca and sentenced to death. Adiy was brought to be hung and was asked, "What do you wish Khubayb?" He said to the pagans, "I wish to pray two units of prayer." So he stood up, made ablution, quickly prayed two units, and then told them, "By Allah, if you would not think that I fear death, I would lengthen the two units of prayer." Then they raised him to hang him and he supplicated against them, "O Allah, count them one by one, kill them to do away with them, and do not leave any one of them." They asked, "Do you wish that Muhammad be in your place and that you be with your family and your wealth?" He said, "No! By Allah, I do not wish that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) be hurt by a thorn, and that I be with my family and my wealth." Then before they killed him Khubayb chanted:

I do not care as long as I am killed as a Muslim,
From which side my death comes in the way of Allah.
And that is for His sake, and if He wills,
He will bless parts of the body torn.

Once again, I'm not saying that you will go through this, but such stories must wake something up in your heart.... Islam is so precious!! Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is so precious, and Baghdad, the previous Capital of the Muslim Ummah is so precious!

The last story is what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was told by Jibreel during the Journey of Al-Israa wal Mi'raj (The Night Flight). On his journey, the Prophet (pbuh) smelled a very nice odor. He asked Jibreel about this pleasant scent and Jibreel informed him this good smell was coming from the grave of the hairdresser of the Pharaoh's daughter. This woman was a good, pious believer. One day, as she was combing Pharaoh's daughter's hair, the comb fell from her hand. At this she said, "*Bismillah*" (In the name of Allah). Pharaoh's daughter asked her, "Papa?" When she said no, the daughter questioned, "Do you have a god other than my father?" The woman said, "Yes. My Lord and the Lord of your father is Allah." Pharaoh's daughter told her father what had happened. Pharaoh demanded this woman to leave Islam, but she refused. At that, Pharaoh threatened to kill her children. He brought a great pot of water and built a great fire under it. When the water boiled, Pharaoh brought her children and started to drop them into that pot one after the other. Throughout all this, the woman remained steadfast to Islam, but when Pharaoh reached her youngest child, a little boy still breast-feeding, she felt pity for him and started to think about obeying the Pharaoh. At that, Allah enabled this child to speak. He said to his mother, "O Mother, be patient. The torture of the Hereafter is far more severe than the torture of this life, and do not be reluctant, because you are right." This miracle gave her [persistence](#) and her baby was thrown into the boiling water and she died in the same way. She died as a martyr. The good odor the Prophet smelled coming from her grave is an indication of her high status. See how Allah rewards those who are [persistent](#) in their faith?

In this chapter, I was trying to show examples of people who were [persistent](#) and sacrificed their life for Islam. All that we are asked to do is be [persistent](#) and continue to pray to Allah and ask for His help and to continue to try to change ourselves, because unless we change our own selves, Allah won't change the overall condition of our Ummah. Didn't He say, "**Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves**" (13:11)?

Step 15: Persistence (3 of 3)

In this chapter we will discuss "How to be persistent". First lets go through some typical everyday cases of people that didn't stand firm and didn't have [persistence](#). There's the example of the young man that started to draw nearer to Allah, and he really enjoyed it. Then all of the sudden, he bumped into a Muslim that claimed to be pious but was a very bad example of a Muslim. Or while entering the mosque, he took off his new pair of shoes and after prayer he discovered that they were stolen. This young man, now disappointed, started drifting away again. This young man wasn't [persistent](#). Allah The Almighty, warns us not to be so shaky and weak. Allah says, ***"And among mankind is he who worships Allah as if he was upon an edge. If good befalls him, he is content therewith; but if a trial befalls him, he turns back on his face. He loses both this world and the Hereafter. That is evident loss."*** (22:11). Never link your performance as a devout Muslim with the wrong behaviors of the Muslims around you. If everyone around you is far from Allah, you get closer. If everyone around you forgot about Allah, you continue to remember.

Another typical example... A Muslim starts to draw nearer to Allah because he or she wants God to do something for them; help them pass exams, help them marry this or that person etc. And then as soon as Allah gives them what they want, they drift away once again.... no [persistence](#). Allah describes such people in the Quran: ***"Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their covenant), averse (from its fulfillment). So He put as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till the Day, whereon they shall meet Him: because they broke their covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again)."*** (9:75-77).

These are examples we see everyday. Maybe one of them will click with you and you'll feel that you were there one day. It's important to be aware of these forms of weakness to try to avoid them and become more [persistent](#). Another classical example is that of a person who loses interest in serving Islam because he was harmed. For example, a Muslim starts to love Islam so much he starts to talk to his friends about it and encourage them to be better Muslims, so they make fun of him or mock him saying, "O Mister Sheikh what are you going to preach us today?" So this brother (or sister) feels embarrassed and starts to forget about it and drifts away. Harm may be also in another way. For example a dear sister was harmed at work because of her Hijab, and so she preferred her worldly job to obeying Allah and took the Hijab off. Allah describes such people saying, ***"Then there are among men such as say, "We believe in Allah.; but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) Allah, they treat men's oppression as if it were the Wrath of Allah."*** (29:10). It's a classical example of people falling.

Another example is the one of a very, very religious Muslim. He or she has been religious for many years, but unfortunately, no longer feels its beauty, or can't taste the sweet taste of being close to Allah. It has become a habit, without any feelings to it, no more tears of fear or love towards Allah, no more passion for Islam. Allah tells these people, ***"Has not the Time arrived for the Believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the Truth which has been revealed (to them), and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard? For many among them are rebellious transgressors."*** (57:16). When this verse was revealed, the Companions started to cry with each other feeling guilty because they felt that Allah was criticizing their hard hearts. The Companions thought that their hearts have become hard... (Sigh) how should we feel?

Many examples of people that weren't [persistent](#). Don't be one of them and stand firm! Be [persistent](#)!! But how? I'll tell you...

The factors that lead to [persistence](#):

1- Seeking Allah's assistance and constant supplication (duaa').

Don't ever think that this isn't important. By Allah, this is the most important factor. Seek help from the Creator of this Universe, from the One that possess all Power and Knowledge, Allah! Allah said to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), *"And their purpose was to tempt you away from that which We had revealed unto you, to substitute in our name something quite different; (in that case), behold! they would certainly have made you (their) friend! And had We not given you strength, you would nearly have inclined to them a little."* (17:74). If you need strength and persistence, ask Allah for it, He is the source of strength and persistence. *"Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter."* (14:27). We can't do anything in this world except with the assistance of Allah. That's why in the *Fatiha* we recite in every prayer we say, *"You do we worship, and Your aid we seek."* (1:5).

2- Having good and righteous friends.

Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you if you will be able to stand firm or not. If you are drawing nearer to Allah and your friends are drifting farther, they'll pull you with them. Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you if you will be able to repent to Allah or not. Friends are a major factor in our life. They could make us better people and they could make us worse. This isn't just for young Muslims, this is also meant for Muslim adults also. Your friends have lots of influence on your persistence. Good companionship dear brothers and sisters, we all need it. Even Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) needed it, and that's why Allah told him in the Quran: *"And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life."* (18:28). If Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) needed good and righteous friends around him, then we certainly do also. But where can I find such friends? You'll find them in mosques and Islamic centers or in the prayer room in your University. They exist, but you have to search for them in the right places. If you find them, cling on to them and never leave them. But let me remind you of something very important. Search for Muslims that are pious but at the same time balanced and successful. Our religion is a balanced religion and we should implement balance and moderation in all aspects of our life. Be aware of radicals that give a bad example of the beautiful Muslim Character. When you meet pious, rational and balanced Muslims, don't get together with them only to pass time, but aside from that, help each other become better Muslims, learn Quran together, organize activities for other Muslims, serve Islam together. Pray to Allah and ask Him to guide you to a good Muslim who has a character compatible to yours.

3- Doing something for Islam. Work for your religion.

Make an effort for Islam. Allah says, *"O you who believe! If you will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly."* (47:7). That's what we are trying to do, we are trying to keep our feet firmly planted, we want to be persistent. When you do something for Islam, bit by bit, Islam starts to become your major interest and focus in life, and you will start to feel that you belong to Islam. We all believe in Islam, but not all of us feel that they belong to Islam, not all of us feel that Islam is their identity. How can you transform your belief (Islam) into your identity? You can achieve that by doing something for your belief. Work for Islam and it will become your Identity and you will start to feel that you belong to it. What can I do for Islam? First you must ask Allah sincerely that He allows you to work for Him. Think about what you can do for Islam, the sky is the limit! Invite non-Muslims to Islam. Encourage your Muslim friends to be better Muslims. Participate in your university's Muslim Student Association, learn how to recite the Quran and teach your friends, built a website for Islam, volunteer in an Orphanage.... Many young Muslims are already starting to do these things and it's helping them become better Muslims. Use your talents and skills to serve Islam. Can you draw, act, write, or make electric circuits? Can you cook? Whatever you can do, think how you could use it to serve Islam.... Come on, do something!

4- Reading Quran frequently.

Make it part of your daily program. Even if you don't read Arabic, read the translation and read the explanation of the verses to get a deep feeling of what is written. Get attached to the Quran. This book is a miracle! This book is guidance from Allah, so hold on to it!!!

These are the four factors you need to remain **persistent**. If you ask Allah for assistance, have good friends, work for Islam, and strengthen your bond with the Quran, I assure you that you will remain **persistent** until the day you die. Please take these factors seriously. We need you to remain firm and **persistent**. Enough falling, enough weakening, its time we get up and stay up!

Step 16: Hope

In this chapter we will talk about **hope**. Is this a time to talk about **hope**? Baghdad has been sacked, again, the situation in Palestine is getting worse, and the overall situation of Muslims all over the world is miserable and you want to talk about **hope**?? Yes, of course, this is the most suitable time to talk about **hope**. Some people have lost all **hope** in a change and think that our Ummah's rise is just a dream that will never come true. Such despair is very dangerous because it leads to losing confidence in Allah's Ability and Power. Such despair causes and imbalance in our belief in Destiny. Despair brings with it weakness, failure and loss of orientation. Even though Muslims are one fifth of this planet's population, look how many gold medals we win in the Olympics, look at how many Nobel Prizes we receive, how many times did we win the World Cup.... one of the reasons for our overall failure is despair. Despair is our enemy and that's why today we will fight despair with **hope**.

Having **hope** means being positive, having **hope** means doing something. **Hope** means that if there is a will there is a way. **Hope** means that the dream could come true. Today we want to plant **hope** in our hearts, today we want to defeat despair and sense of defeat. If **hope** is embedded in our hearts, we will restore our confidence in Allah, and if that happens will call on to Him in our supplications and prayers, and if that happens we will become more positive, and if we become positive, we will make an effort and work, which will lead to productivity... **Hope** is a driving force that increases energy and production. This whole book of "Until they change themselves" will lose its value if we lack **hope**. Why would I want to change myself if I don't have **hope**? **Hope** is essential for us.

What should we **hope** for? We need to keep the **hope** that the overall situation of our Ummah will improve, that Allah will grant us Honor, that Palestine and Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque will be liberated. **Hope** that our Ummah will once again be a source of knowledge for the world. **Hope** that after the darkness of the past century, finally there will be light once again.

The most religion that embedded **hope** in the hearts of its believers is Islam. In the Quran you find words like "*Bushra*" which means glad tidings, or news that makes your face relax and smile. In the beginning of the Quran, verse 25 of chapter 2, Allah says, "**But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow.**" Another snapshot of hope and happiness described in the Quran is when Allah says, "**Some faces that Day will be beaming, Laughing, rejoicing.**" (80:38,39). Allah is embedding in our hearts **hope** and is bringing glad tidings to those who do good deeds. More than 60 verses in the Quran mention glad tidings. Reading the Quran is supposed to give you **hope** and remove despair from your heart. It gives you **hope** in Allah's Mercy, in His Assistance and Victory.

Another thing that is very interesting is that "*Istibshar*" which is to be happy and relaxed because you know that something good will happen, is an inherent character in human beings and that's why the word for "human" in Arabic is "*Bashar*". When Allah said to the Angels "**I am about to create man from clay.**" (38:71). The word in the Quran for "man" is *Bashar*, which implies "*Bushra*", a word that brings meanings like happiness, **hope** and relaxation to mind. Therefore, originally humanity is supposed to have **hope**, and this Ummah in particular is supposed to have **hope** and should never let despair crawl into their hearts. In the Quran, you find Allah constantly giving glad tidings to the Prophets. Allah says about Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh), "**So We gave him the good news of a boy possessing forbearance.**" (37:101). And Ibrahim's wife also, "**And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed: But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob.**" (11:71). And Jacob (pbuh) himself, when his son Yusuf (pbuh) was lost for decades and Jacob lost his sight out of weeping for this great loss, what did Allah say? "**Then when the bearer of the good news came, He cast (the shirt) over his face, and he forthwith regained clear sight. He said: "Did I not say to you, 'I know from Allah that which ye know not?'"**" (12:96).

Another example in the Quran is when Allah says, **"O Zakariya! We give you good news of a son: His name shall be Yahya."** (19:7). And another example, **"Behold! The angels said: "O Mary! Allah gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah."** (3:45).

See how "good news" is everywhere in the Quran? See how [hope](#) is the banner of our religion? See how despair is such an un-Islamic behavior? By Allah there is [Hope!!!](#) By Allah the darkness of this night is ending and the sun will rise again!!

But take care about this observation. The glad tidings given to Prophets in the Quran was related to having children, but the glad tidings given to the Believers at large was the coming of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Listen to what Allah says in the Quran: **"And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of an Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad."** (61:6). And Allah Himself says to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the Quran, **"Verily We have sent you in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner."** (2:119).

Not only in the Quran, but also in the everyday Islamic vocabulary you find words that imply "glad tidings". For example, you have "The ten *mubashareen bel-Jannah*" which means the ten Companions that were given glad tidings when they were alive that they will be granted Paradise. And when Khadeeja (rAa), the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was dying, Jibreel came down to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) telling him to give Khadeeja glad tidings of a Palace made out of pearls in Paradise. Even in the most difficult situations in our life, we are supposed to have [hope](#). This Religion is a source of [Hope](#) for humanity.

Now lets discuss something very important. Are we mentioning "[hope](#)" today, just to raise our morale and feel better, or because its an Islamic obligation to have [hope](#)? Actually, having [hope](#) is an obligation for Muslims. Listen to what Allah told us Jacob told his children: **"O my sons! Go and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's Soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith."** (12:87). This means that loosing [hope](#) in Allah's Mercy is a sign of loosing your Faith, it doesn't mean that you are a non-Believer, but it means that you are adopting and imitating a non-Believer's characteristic. See how important [hope](#) is for a Muslim, its part of our Faith. Didn't our Lord say, **"Peace be on you: Your Lord has inscribed for Himself (the rule of) mercy."** (6:54)? And didn't He say, **"My mercy extends to all things"** (7:156)? How then can we not have [hope](#)??

A non-devout Muslim looses [hope](#) when the going gets tough, but the devout and sincere Muslim gains [hope](#) when things get worse because he is absolutely sure that Allah Sees and Hears and nothing happens except with His will.

Look and see how our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to plant [Hope](#) in our hearts. Adyy ibn Hatem was a very wealthy and honored man but not yet a Muslim. He became Muslim after the following conversation with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Lets listen to Adyy tell the story. He said, "Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came to him and said, 'I know why you do not wish to embrace Islam. You think that it is the preserve of the weak and the helpless, and that the Muslims are contemptible to the Arabs. Do you know Al-Hira (a town on the borders of Iraq)?' I replied, "I did not visit it, but I have heard of it." The Prophet (pbuh) declared, 'By Him in Whose hands is my soul, Islam shall be so firmly-established that a woman might travel from Al-Hira to the Sacred House without guard or escort, and that the treasures of Chosroes ibn Hermiz shall be at our disposal.' I interrupted him in astonishment, 'The treasures of Chosroes ibn Hermiz?' He said, 'Yes; The treasures of Chosroes ibn Hermiz.' And he continued, saying, 'And wealth and money will be so abundant, they won't find people that need it.'" Adyy continued with his story, "And thus we are today; Women come from Al-Hira to circumambulate the House without guard or escort, while I myself was one of those who seized the treasures of Chosroes ibn Hermiz. By Him in Whose hands is my soul, the third of the prophecies shall assuredly be realized, for it was prophesied by the

Messenger of Allah." The thrust of [Hope](#) and Confidence in Prophet Muhammad's voice, removed any traces of doubt in Adyy's heart. Can we have such [hope](#) that Allah will make us victorious and revive this Ummah once again?

During the Battle of the Trench, when the Muslims were surrounded by 10000 pagans from all over Arabia, out numbered and hungry, they started to dig a Trench around Medina to prevent the enemy from crossing and entering. While the trench was being dug the Muslims came upon a large rock, which their picks could not shift. When they complained to the Messenger of Allah about it, he took up a pick, saying, "In the name of Allah." His first blow broke off a third of the rock and sent sparks flying. "Allah is Great!!" he said, "I have been given the keys of Rome. By Allah, I see its red castles, if Allah wills." He struck at the rock a second time and another third broke off. "Allah is Great! I have been given the keys of Persia and, by Allah, I see the white castles of Al-Mada'in". With his third blow, he invoked the name of Allah and the rest of the rock shattered. Can you imagine in such situation, surrounded, outnumbered, and hungry, the Prophet is promising the Companions with such victories? [Hope](#) dear brothers and sisters. [Hope](#), and Confidence in Allah's Victory!

After our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was verbally and physically abused from the people of Ta'if, things started to seem very dark. Nobody is embracing Islam anymore, Quraysh is oppressing and torturing Muslims, and no city is ready to defend the message of Islam. At that moment Jibreel came with the Angel of Mountains, which said "O Muhammad, if you wish, I could crush them (the people of Ta'if) between these two mountains!!" What did Prophet Muhammad reply with? Did despair crawl into his heart letting him feel that there is no way that these people will embrace Islam and they are better off crushed? No!! He said "No, for maybe Allah will raise from their following generations people who will believe in Him." The Messenger of Allah had [hope](#) that the people who abused him and shed his honorable blood will enter into Islam one day. He never gave up on them. [Hope](#) dear brothers and sisters, [hope](#).

So what are you waiting for? What are your dreams? If you have a dream then remain firm and persistent to make that dream come true and never loose [hope](#). With Allah's Will it will happen!!

If you're an athlete, plant [hope](#) firmly in your heart and say "With the Will of Allah, I will train and win a golden medal in the Olympics, why not?? I'm from the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)!!!" If you want to be the best Architect in your country, if that's your dream, stick to it and make it come true!

What's your dream??? Make it come true!!

What's the dream of this Ummah? Lets dream together, and let's make our dream come true!

What's our dream? Entering Al-Aqsa Mosque hand in hand, praying there, prostrating to Allah inside that Holy Mosque. Imagine how many Muslims lived and died when Al-Aqsa Mosque was occupied, and Allah honors you amongst them all by letting you be one of the Muslims that liberate it and enter it, victorious over your enemies and humble towards your Lord. You're entering the Mosque the same way Salahuddin entered it, and before him Omar ibn Al-Khattab. Who do wish to be with you? Who's hand do you want to be holding while entering Al-Aqsa Mosque? Who's tears of joy do you want to see on that day? Can you hear the voices around you? "Allahu Akbar" is coming from everywhere.... Can you hear that man reciting aloud: **"And say: 'Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish.'" (17:81)**. Can you see the gates of the Mosque? Can you see the Dome of the Rock? See the olive trees? See your Palestinian brothers greeting you with hugs and joy? Can you see those two people in front of you holding each other's hands? It's an Iraqi holding the hand of a Kuwaiti!! They're entering Al-Aqsa Mosque together! Can you hear the Azan? Are you imagining Bilal? Can you feel your warm tears on your cheek? Can you see that train? What train is that? Is the train that passes by every single Muslim country, linking them all together, and bringing Muslims from all over the world to Al-Aqsa Mosque to pray with there. Can you see yourself kissing the hands of a

Palestinian woman? Your telling her "Your son was martyred, I'm your new son." Or saying, "Would you give me permission to rebuild your house that was demolished?" What a beautiful dream.... Do you want it to come true? Then live for it! Dedicate your life to make that dream come true!

This dream isn't an illusion, its reality, it could happen, it will happen!! But succeed in your life, succeed in your studies, in your work, be more productive! It will happen but change yourself so that Allah may change us!! It will happen!!! It will happen!! The dream will come true!!!

Why am I so sure? Why am I so confident??? 10 reason, write them down, memorize them....

1- It's a Divine Law

"Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns" (3:140). Leading the World doesn't remain with only one group, Allah rotates it based on His Will and decreed Divine Laws. First the East led the world because it was the Land of the Prophets and the Kingdoms of Solomon and David (pbut) were so powerful. Then the power rotated to the West, the Romans and Greeks lead the world. Then the power shifted again to the East and the Muslims lead the world, and then it went again to the West the way we see to day... and then, what's next?? Our turn is next!! Another Divine Law, **"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves" (13:11).** Aren't we changing?? We are! And therefore Allah will change our overall situation!

2- This Ummah never dies, it could get weak, but never dies? Why? Because it has the Eternal and Final Message of Allah with it, and the Message must be conveyed and therefore this Ummah will never die. This Ummah isn't like the Greeks, Romans, Persians, or Pharaohs? No, this Ummah has a mission to accomplish. The Creator of the Worlds assists this Ummah in accomplishing its mission! This Ummah never dies! Would life on this planet last if the Sun or Moon were taken away? No. The same thing with this Ummah, its a fundamental ingredient in this planet, because it bears the teachings of the Creator to the people of this world. The past 100 years weren't the Sunset of Islam... it was just an eclipse. If this Ummah dies, then it means that the world has come to an end. This Ummah will get up again!

3- Allah says, **"Verily, We will indeed make victorious Our Messengers and the believers... in this world's life and on the Day when the witnesses will stand forth." (40:51).** See, victory is not just on the Day of Judgment, but in this World also! Listen to Allah's promise, **"Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to the present rulers in the land, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them authority to practice their religion which He has chosen for them. And He will surely give them in exchange a safe security after their fear, provided that they worship Me and do not associate anything with Me." (24:55).** Listen to this one also, **"They want to extinguish Allah's Light with their mouths, but Allah will not allow except that His Light should be perfected even though the disbelievers hate it." (9:32).**

Has [hope](#) been embedded in your heart or not?? Not yet? Then listen to what the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said.

4- **"Verily, Allah (swt) folded the earth for me, so much so that I saw its East and its West: The kingdom of my Ummah will reach as far as the earth was folded for me."** Is that a glad tidings or not? The Prophet was asked, "Which of the two cities would be conquered first, Constantinople or Rome?" to which he replied, **"The city of Heraclius would be conquered first (i.e. Constantinople)."** Then 800 years later, Muhammad Al-Fatih conquered Constantinople. Constantinople has been opened, now its time for Rome, it's a Prophetic promise, and it will come true. But take care, Opening a City doesn't necessarily mean by war. It could happen without a drop of blood and instead by dialogue, the way Indonesia the biggest Muslim country entered Islam. Look at the Europeans today, they are entering Islam in large numbers, people need Islam, and Islam is growing everywhere in Europe, including Rome.

Rome will be ruled by the Muslims. Also, Prophet Muhammad said, "The Last Day will not arrive until the Earth is filled with injustice and treachery, then Allah will send a man that will fill it with justice and mercy." It's a Prophetic promise and it will happen with the Will of Allah!!

Has hope stretched its roots deep into your heart yet?? Not yet? More reasons to have hope and confidence...

5- Whenever this religion becomes at the edge of destruction, it raises high up again and becomes stronger than it used to be. This can be seen repeatedly in our history. During the Year of Grief, Khadeeja (rAa) the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died as well as Abu Talib his uncle. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lost his emotional supporter, his wife, and his only political support, his uncle. Things got really bad, but what happened right after? The Hijra and the first Islamic State with all the victories that followed! Every time you think that its impossible, Islam returns stronger than before. When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died and most of Arabia rejected Islam again and started to fight the few Believers remaining, Islam was at the brink of destruction, but what happened right after? Both the Roman and Persian Empires were defeated after Islam was re-established firmly in Arabia! The Tawa'if dynasty fell in Andalusia, and then right after, the Dynasty of The Murabits rose up and shined for 400 years in Spain! The Crusaders occupied Jerusalem for 90 years, and right after, Salahuddin liberated it! The Tatars sacked Baghdad and killed millions of Muslims, and right after, Kutuz defeated them and the Tatars willingly embraced Islam. Muslims were expelled out of Spain and they lost Al-Andalusia, at the same time, the Ottoman Empire rose in Turkey. Islam was expelled from the West of Europe and at the same time rose high in its East! This Religion has a mysterious inner power that keeps it alive no matter what happens. When the going gets tough, all of the sudden an enormous amount of energy and power bursts from the Muslims.

What else make me so sure our dreams will come true and the Ummah will rise again?

6- The widespread awareness and awakening in our Youth all over the world. Mosques full of youth, students excelling in their studies. Muslims from all ages are learning Tajweed and memorizing Quran. Huge numbers of sisters are wearing the Hijab. Islamic books are the most sold books in the Muslim world. More people want to perform Hajj and Omra, and from all ages. Successful Muslims in different domains of life are getting closer to Allah! Popular Muslim celebrities are getting closer to Allah and becoming devout Muslims. Non-Muslim celebrities in the West are embracing Islam. Glad Tidings!!!! Everywhere you go you find Glad Tidings!!!

7- Muslim Women are getting closer to Allah! And if women get closer to Allah than the whole family becomes closer to Allah, because she is the mother, wife and sister. Muslim women are half of the society, and they bring up the other half!

8- Our Ummah has an enormous amount of energy and resources. Spiritual energy, manpower, financial and economical resources.

9- The rest of the world is getting weaker in its principles and morals with the spread of immorality and social bankruptcy. As if Allah is showing us that all the systems other than Islam don't work, and only Islam could be our complete way of life. Didn't we try Communism and Socialism, where did it take us? Aren't we trying Capitalism? Are we getting better? Nothing works except what Allah has given Mankind, Islam. Even the previous widespread obsession with the Western Culture is shrinking in our Muslim countries.

10- The last reason that I'm sure that our victory and rise is soon is that Victory comes right when we reach the worst levels of defeat. Dawn comes right after the night reaches its darkest stages.

Hope brothers and sisters HOPE!! Spread the word!!!

Step 17: The Importance of Knowledge and Education

Lets face the facts. An Ummah without [knowledge](#), without people interested in research and discovery, without people acknowledging the importance of research and development, is an Ummah that will face enormous difficulty in rising once again. It is essential for our Ummah to have youth and adults excelling at different sciences and technologies.

The first thing I will do is present you some numbers so that you could realize the huge gap between our Ummah and the West.

60% of Muslims in this world can't read or write; they're illiterate. People have reached the moon and cloned animals, and more than half of our Ummah can't read or write, even though the first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was "**Read**", how ironic! Now compare our Ummah to a country like Canada. In 2002 it was announced that the percentage of illiterate people in Canada was 0%. Let me just draw your attention to a small difference in terminology. When Muslims mention illiteracy, they mean, "not being able to read and write", but when Canadians mention it, they mean people that don't know how to use the computer! 0% illiteracy in Canada means that almost every person there knows how to use the computer.... huge gap right?

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Physics and Medicine started in 1901. Ever since 1901, do you know how many Muslims won the Nobel Prize in one of these three fields? Two. Just two. Abdus Salam from Pakistan and Ahmed Zewail from Egypt. Lets compare that to other countries. The US won the Nobel Prize in Medicine 81 times, the UK 26 times, Germany 16 times and France 8 times. See how huge the gap is? How can our Ummah advance if we are not successful scientifically? This is something we really need to consider seriously.

How much did Muslims contribute to technological advancements and inventions? More than 99% of the inventions made in the last 200 years were made by non-Muslims. Automobiles, pens, mobile phones, electricity, you name it. We have nothing to do with them. Walk into any supermarket in any Muslim country and look at the products, you'll find that the most of them are imported. Even our prayer rugs are imported. Can you imagine the gap? This must change! We need Muslim youth of Nobel Prize quality!! What? You think it's impossible? Did you forget what we said about Hope? Of course it's not impossible. Look at India, its one of the most countries in the world that export computer software. During the year 2000, India exported 6 Billion Dollars worth of computer software. During 2002, it went up to 8 Billion Dollars! India is a Third World Country, but look at what its doing! Why am I using India as an example? Because it's very similar to most Muslim countries when it comes to the economy. India has more people under the line of poverty than many Muslim countries have, and so a weak economy isn't an excuse for us. Why am I using computer software as an example? Because all you need to program is a table, a computer and a human being. I'm sure that we have tables, and I'm sure we have computers in our countries. The problem is in the human factor, we need to be more serious about advancing in [science](#) and [technology](#). I'm not talking about rockets or nuclear power plants, I'm just giving an example of computer programming to show you that we don't have an excuse. The German Consular announced in an international computer exhibition that Germany will be issuing 30000 working permits to Indians because Germany's ambitions in the software industry and programming are far higher than its current national abilities and they need Indian mind-power. We have no excuse.

Our scientific and technological backwardness resulted in us being imitators instead of innovators. The West is controlling us because we imitate them. Why is all this happening to us? It's happening for many reasons. First of all, it happened because we stopped respecting [Science](#) and [Knowledge](#). Instead of conducting research and developing our industries, we preferred to import things and depend on others. Once upon a time, the Caliph Haroon Ar-Rashid himself was pouring the water for a Muslim Scientist to wash his hands after eating. The Caliph did that because he honored the Scientist. Another reason of our

backwardness is because most Muslims study just to get a certificate to improve their social status, not to benefit their Ummah. This is a question to all Muslim students in the Muslim World, why are you studying and taking exams? Is it just so that you could go on to the next year? Or to really learn and then to assess and evaluate the amount of knowledge you acquired throughout the year? How many of us study to really benefit our Ummah?

These are some other reasons behind our scientific and technological backwardness:

- Muslim students don't necessarily study what they are good at. Parents don't know what the talents of their children are, and so they don't direct their children's education in a way that would develop their talents. Not only that, but the children themselves don't know what their talents are, which make things worse. The outcome of all this is that 10 years after graduation a person realizes that he or she isn't happy and isn't motivated any more. So either they complete their career without motivation at all, or after such a long time they change fields and start all over again. Where are the parents to help their children discover their talents? Where are the youth that say, "This is what I'm talented at, and this is what I want to do"?

- Misunderstanding Islam and spirituality. A classical example is that of a "straight A" student that starts to practice Islam more and becomes a devoted Muslim, and all of the sudden, his academic performance deteriorates. Why?? Because he thought that being a devout Muslim meant performing rituals all day and neglecting one's studies. Not only is he ruining his career, but also he's giving a bad image of a pious Muslim because ever since he became devout, he started to fail at his studies. Another big mistake many enthusiastic Muslims do is abandoning their studies in Med-School, or Engineering to dedicate themselves to Da'wah and Islamic Sciences. Why? You can invite people to Islam as a Doctor and as an Engineer. The necessary Islamic knowledge that you need to learn doesn't require that you leave your original studies. Finish your studies first and then, if you still want to, study Islamic Sciences. Being a Physician and knowledgeable of Islam at the same time, is better than leaving our Ummah without successful physicians.

- We've stopped reading. Not only is 60% of our Ummah illiterate, but also the remaining 40% don't read anymore. The first word revealed to our Prophet was **"Read"**, and we're not reading! Look at the West... take the subway in the morning and look how many people are reading. How many of us read literature relevant to their specializations? We have no excuses; the Internet didn't leave us any excuses. The Internet, which is an invaluable information source, has been reduced by Muslim youth to chatting, games and chain emails. This has to change; we need to be more serious about [knowledge](#) and [education](#).

- Cheating in exams. In many Muslim countries, from Kindergarten to University, you find students cheating. Please, please... don't cheat in an exam even if you will fail in it. Fail in that subject and retake it is better than cheating yourself, your University and the whole Ummah.

- Students are overwhelmed with theory without knowing their applications. Therefore they can't imagine the importance of what they are learning and it becomes just more facts to memorize and forget right after the exams. Don't blame the Staff, but instead go and ask graduates about what this and that turned out to be important for.

- Many Muslim students choose a specialization, not based on interest, but based on how easy it is or how easy you can find a job afterwards, not based on which one will benefit the Ummah more.

- Selfishness is another reason, as well as lack of sincerity. A senior doesn't want to train a junior, why? Because he's afraid that one day the junior will take his position. And the teacher at school doesn't want to teach the students, why? So that they could give them private lessons after school. Of course I'm not generalizing here, but such examples do exist in our Muslim countries.

- Not spending money on [Research](#) and [Development](#). You find people that perform Hajj every year, but if you ask him to help fund a certain research project, he refuses. Also, the lack of teamwork is an important reason behind our failure. Working independently and without communication doesn't match with research.

- Many Muslim countries don't have a clear research strategy that takes into consideration the current abilities and needs of the country.

Someone might ask... "Well couldn't it be that Islam as a religion contradicts with scientific and technological advancement?" Maybe this question occurs to some of us. Lets see what Islam has to say about this.

As we previously said, the first word to be revealed was **"Read"**. Even though Prophet Muhammad couldn't read and write, the first order from Allah was to read? What's the significance of this? It's saying that with the beginning of Prophet Muhammad's Prophethood, the era of unexplained miracles has ended, and the era of [knowledge](#) and [science](#) has begun, and this Ummah must learn. The order to read wasn't directed specifically to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but to the entire Ummah, this Ummah must read and learn in order to become victorious and prevail. It's very different from other previous nations that flourished because of miracles. So for example the Children of Israel escaped from Egypt with Moses' staff when he used it to split the sea. Prophets David and Solomon (pbuh) built an enormous kingdom with miracles that Allah granted them like controlling the wind, Jinns, etc. But the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) won't rise that way, no more miracles, this Ummah will rise with **"Read"**, with [knowledge](#) and [learning sciences](#). Of course there were miracles at the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but they never played a pivotal role in the rise of our Ummah, because what plays the pivotal role is the human factor, you, but after you follow this religion, love it, **"Read"** and [learn](#)!

The second Surah to be revealed was the chapter of the "Pen". Allah made an oath by swearing with the pen: **"Nun. By the pen and that which they write (therewith)."** The word **"Aleem"** or Most Knowledgeable was mentioned 224 times in the Quran. The word **"Ilm"** or [Knowledge/Science](#) is mentioned in the Quran 375 times. In Bukhari's book of authentic Prophetic sayings, there are 102 Hadiths concerning the virtues of [knowledge](#) and [learning](#). Listen to what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, **"Who ever took a path to seek knowledge, Allah will facilitate for him a path to Paradise."** Muslims don't go to Universities just to improve their social image, or just because of the predicted salary they will earn afterwards, or just because this school is easier than the other, No, Muslims go through the educational process for the [knowledge](#)! Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said, **"Verily the Angels spread their wings for the seeker of knowledge out of satisfaction from what he is doing."** Do you feel it everyday when you're going to school? Can you imagine the angels shading you with their wings? They're proud of you! Muslims shouldn't be studying just to pass exams, but they should be studying to benefit the Ummah. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, **"Verily all of the Creation seeks forgiveness for Scholars, even the ant in its hole and the whale in the depths of the sea seek forgiveness to the person who teaches people knowledge."** Listen to this Hadith, **"The Preference of the Scholar to the Worshiper, is like the preference of the Moon to the rest of the Planets."** Didn't our Prophet (pbuh) say, **"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim"**? As if Islam and ignorance don't match together. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said, **"Who ever leaves his home to seek knowledge is in the Path of Allah until he returns."** This is how Islam perceives [knowledge](#). This is how Islam celebrates and elevates [learning](#).

Look at the Prophets mentioned in the Quran; Allah says that Yusuf (pbuh) said to the King of Egypt: **"Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land, surely I am a good keeper, knowing well."** (12:55). He had [knowledge](#). And look Prophets David and Solomon, Allah says, **"We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon: And they both said: "Praise be to Allah, Who has favored us above many of his servants who believe!"** (27:15). They were favored with the blessing of [Knowledge](#).

How can our Ummah rise if we think that our victory comes only from praying? Of course we must pray, but parallel to that we need to implement another part of our religion, which is advancing in the [scientific](#) and [technological](#) domain.

Look what Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did so that our Ummah would be a learned and advanced Ummah. After the Battle of Badr, the Muslims captured 70 Meccan pagans. The ransom of a prisoner was to teach 10 Muslims how to read and write, imagine how many Muslims became literate because of such a wise decision. Muslims weren't after money, they could have asked for money as a ransom, but no! They were after the [knowledge](#). Now let me tell you something incredible, do you know who was amongst those who learned how to read and write? You won't believe it, Zaid ibn Thabit! He's the one that assembled and wrote the first official complete copy of the Quran! Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) didn't just let the men learn, but also the women. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to tell Al-Shifaa' bint Abdillah, a famous companion, to go teach Hafsa bint Omar and other women how to read and write. Many times people send me emails and call me asking me to help them think of something they could do for Islam.... why not teach people how to read and write?

What else did The Messenger of Allah encourage? Learning foreign languages. He told Zaid ibn Thabit to go and learn Hebrew and not to come back until he excelled at it. Zaid said, "So I went and learned it in 18 days!" The Prophet was surprised to see him back so soon and asked him, "[Did you learn it?!](#)" Zaid said, "Yes". Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) then asked, "[And can you write it and read it??](#)" Zaid replied, "and I can write it and read it O Messenger of Allah." Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) knew that understanding foreign languages is essential for the rise of an Ummah. Do you speak a foreign language fluently? Why not teach it to interested Muslims?

Look how Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) fought against superstitions so that people would instead use a scientific method of thinking. He said, "[Who ever approaches a fortune teller and believes him, has rejected what has been revealed to Muhammad](#)". On the day that Ibrahim, the son of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died, a solar eclipse occurred and people started to say that the sun is sad for the death of Ibrahim. So Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came out and taught them that this was a natural phenomenon that has nothing to do with his son's death.

Do you know that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) frequently used what we call today Statistics and Maintaining Databases? He would tell his assistants to bring him the number of Muslims, or the number of Muslims that have weapons etc. and Omar ibn Al-Khattab adopted this system after him.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) also encouraged teamwork. Hassan ibn Thabit (rAa) was the poet of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and the impact of poetry at the time of the Prophet was similar to that of Media today. Hassan told the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) that he was going to write a poem against Quraysh (as part of Media confrontation). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was worried that Hassan would mix up the non-Believers of Quraysh with the believers and so told him to cooperate with Abu Bakr because he was the most knowledgeable person with the "who's who" of Arabia. When the pagans of Quraysh received the poem, they were astonished at its accuracy. All the lineages and ancestries were correct and all those mentioned were pagans. After reading the poem they exclaimed, "This must be a Hassan/Abu Bakr collaboration!" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) encouraged teamwork!

Within the Quran you find how Prophet Yusuf (pbuh) made a 15-year Agricultural and Economical plan for Egypt. How can planning not be integral in a Muslim's life?

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to seek Allah's protection against any [science](#) that is not beneficial. Learn so that you could benefit this Ummah!!

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to discover the talents of his Companions and help them develop it. Khaled ibn Al-Waleed was given a high rank in the Army after his military

ingeniousness became evident. Zaid became the secretary of Prophet Muhammad when his intelligence and sharpness was noticed. Abu Hurayrah had photographic memory and so Prophet Muhammad used to tell him to memorize Hadith.

This is how the our Ummah got up at its beginning? So what should we do now? Why not start with teaching people how to read and write? Why not make it our project for the summer? What else? Search for your talent and develop it, start learning a foreign language. Improve your computer skills, learn how to program. Ask people that graduated from the same field you're studying right now about the benefits behind each subject. Don't learn something you can't appreciate its benefit. Most important, don't cheat in the coming exams, please. Please think about what we've talked about today.

Step 18: Giving Sincere Advice

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said, "This religion is all about sincere advice." Giving sincere advice (*naseeha*) to people who need it is an essential part of our religion. Why? What is so special about *naseeha*? It means giving advice because you want good for the advised individual and the whole Ummah. But if I give sincere advice to one person, how could that have an impact on the rest of the Ummah? Think about it, if I give you sincere *naseeha* and you give your friend and it becomes an essential part of our social life then the whole Ummah will be receiving sincere advice.

What is the importance of *naseeha*? *Naseeha* is the tool Allah gave us so that our society will remain healthy and dynamic. The maintenance of our Ummah occurs through sincere advice. If you stop giving *naseeha*, the Ummah will fall. Allah says in the Quran, "You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind..." Is this privilege without a responsibility? Of course not, the verse goes on, "...enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah." (3:110). The responsibility that comes with the privilege is giving sincere advice.

Honestly brothers and sisters, we don't give sincere advice, it's become an alien concept to us. Or one may say, "I tried it once and they made fun of me so I stopped". And another may object saying, "I once gave sincere advice and then I was blamed for the outcome... forget about it!" or "I once gave sincere advice and the person bluntly told me to mind my own business." No my dear brothers and sisters, we don't want anyone to be put in such a situation, that's why we will talk about how to give *naseeha* in more detail. But first, lets talk more about the importance of giving sincere advice?

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "The first three to enter Paradise will be a martyr, a chaste person that insists on chastity, and a man who worshipped Allah in a good manner and gave sincere advice to people." Wow! By giving sincere advice you could be amongst the first to enter Paradise. Give sincere advice so that our society would remain healthy. I can hear you saying that it won't make a difference, but believe me it will. Maybe it will take some time for everyone to get used to it, maybe a year or two, but we have to start right now. Sincere advice needs to become an essential ingredient in our societies and in our Ummah at large.

One of the Companions said, "When I was embracing Islam in front of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), he made me pledge to do three things; to establish prayers, give zakah, and give sincere advice to each and every Muslim". Can you imagine that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) mentioned giving sincere advice with establishing prayers and giving zakah? That shows us how important it is. Another Companion said, "I went to the Messenger of Allah asking him to accept my pledge of allegiance to him but he responded saying 'Under one condition, if you promise to give sincere advice to each and every Muslim'." This man was coming to embrace Islam but the Prophet (pbuh) told him that he has to promise to give sincere advice. So the Companion replied, "By Allah, Whom there is not god except Him, I will verily give you all sincere advice until I die."

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "The slave who gives sincere advice to his master gets double reward." Even slaves long ago and servants today are supposed to give sincere advice, imagine then the responsibility of a free man or woman. He also said "The analogy of me and what I was sent with is that of a man that saw an army coming to attack so he cried out to his people 'An army is attacking! I'm a sincere warner, rescue yourselves!'" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is describing himself as a sincere advisor.

If you see at work that something is wrong, bring it up and say that it is wrong. Give *naseeha* to your family, neighbors, and relatives. Nobody today does that. We've abandoned an essential Muslim characteristic.

Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) said, "There is no good in an community that doesn't have people that give [sincere advice](#), and there is no good in a community that doesn't accept the [sincere advice](#)". He also once stood on the pulpit and said, "May Allah have mercy on a person that came and presented to me my deficiencies". Ask yourself honestly, if someone came up to you and sincerely criticized you, how would you feel? If it will make you feel bad and make you hate that person than something is wrong with you. Instead, you should thank Allah for such a blessing and cling onto that person who cared enough to bring your attention to something wrong you were doing.

But there are etiquettes and conditions to give [naseeha](#):

- Make sure that the person you will [advise](#) really does the wrong thing that you are going to advise him or her about. Don't be random and hypothetical. Address actual problems and shortcomings.
- Purify your intentions before giving [naseeha](#). Don't give [naseeha](#) to appear as a know-it-all, or to give the impression that you are better than the person you are advising. Do it to seek Allah's pleasure and for the welfare of your Ummah.
- Give [naseeha](#) in private. Don't embarrass the person by giving him or her [naseeha](#) in front of other people.
- Be gentle. A man when to the Caliph Haroon Ar-Rashid to advise him, but this man was very harsh and rude. So Haroon Ar-Rashid gently asked him, "My brother, are you better than Prophet Moses (pbuh)"? So that man replied saying no. Haroon Ar-Rashid followed up asking "Am I worse than the Pharaoh?" The man again replied saying no. Haroon Ar-Rashid concluded, "You aren't better than Moses (pbuh) and I'm not worse than the Pharaoh, yet when Allah sent Moses (pbuh) to the Pharaoh He told him to ***"Speak to him in a mild manner so that he might remember or fear."*** (20:44). Be gentle with people, its part of our religion. Giving [sincere advice](#) isn't a fight, be gentle. In another instant, Haroon Ar-Rashid was walking in town and a shepherd saw him and wanted to give him [sincere advice](#) about something. The shepherd walked up to Haroon Ar-Rashid (the Caliph at that time) and said, "Oh Imam, if I give you [sincere advice](#), I will have fear from you. Yet, if I don't give you such [advice](#), I will have fear for you. And my fear for you is greater than my fear from you, so I would like to advise you about this and that..." Can you imagine? A shepherd saying such beautiful words and giving [advice](#) to the leader or the Muslims!
- Take into consideration the circumstances the person may be experiencing. Never forget that we are human beings and not angels. Part of being human is making mistakes. So don't always search for the least mistake to rush and give [sincere advice](#) about, be patient, forgiving and gentle. And never forget that you too make mistakes.

I really hope that we could start to give and accept [sincere advice](#) from now on. We really need to work on it. We need it so that our Ummah could identify things that need to be changed, because ***"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves."*** (13:11).

Step 19: Our Ummah and Productivity

Dear Brothers and sisters, we continue to discuss the things we need to change in our lives so that Allah would change the overall situation of our Ummah. Do you know that the Muslim countries collectively are the richest in the world? Allah (swt) has blessed us with so many natural resources. Our Ummah isn't lacking resources. Neither is our Ummah lacking a goal, because we as Muslims know why we were created and know what we are supposed to achieve in this life. Not only that, but our Ummah isn't lacking principles because Islam has provided us with them. All we lack is Muslims that work. We have so much potential, but without effort, this enormous energy will remain hidden.

This is a painful fact, but we have to know it. Do you know that Japan's annual production is four times greater than the production of our entire Ummah? Try to imagine that. That's even though the majority of Japan's land is mountains and scattered islands. It's the same Japan that is constantly threatened by volcanoes and earthquakes. Japan that was devastated during the Second World War now produces four times more than our entire Ummah. Something must be wrong. Can you imagine that the most productive Muslim country, Indonesia, is ranked the 28th on the global scale? That means that 27 non-Muslim countries are ahead of the most productive Muslim country!

Don't rush and blame the governments and those in charge. We, the individuals, we really don't work as we should. Muslims have a problem called laziness, a problem called "I don't feel like working." We need to remember that [production](#) and [development](#) are two important aspects of Islam. It's not a non-Islamic concept that we need to supplement our religion with. No. Being [productive](#) is part of being a good Muslim.

Lets look at some of the negative examples in our Muslims countries. There's the classical example of the employee that sleeps at 2:00 am even though he knows that he has to be at work at 8 in the morning. He tells himself, "Well everyone goes late, why should I go early?" And if he does go early he goes exhausted. We Muslims are suffering from mental, physical and emotional lethargy, how then can we be [productive](#). Sheikh Al-Sha'rawi once said, "Who ever doesn't produce his own food, doesn't own his decisions". A simple and true wisdom. Another typical example are the employees that sleep at work until someone warns them that their boss is coming so they all get up and do anything to seem as if they are working. We have developed sophisticated excuses to explain failure. We are very creative in finding excuses, but our minds are sterile when it comes to positive and [productive](#) innovation. Of course I'm not generalizing, there are some serious Muslims out there, but the negative examples I'm mentioning really do exist in our Muslim societies. Look at that employee that's surfing the web or playing a game on the computer and the minute someone passes by he maximizes an Excel spreadsheet window as if he was working. This has reached to the extent that companies now block certain websites to prevent their employees from accessing them during work hours. Some people say, "I work as much they pay me" or "this is what my salary is worth" or "they don't even pay us enough, why should we work?" He actually forgot that he accepted to work under these conditions and therefore if he doesn't work the way he ought to, his income will not be purely Halal, because he didn't deserve the money he earned. Other Muslims work as much as would satisfy their boss, not as much as they could actually give, so many examples in our Ummah that are resulting in us being non-productive. [Productivity](#) and Islam are intertwined together dear brothers and sisters, why are we separating them from each other?

We have so many raw materials in our Ummah, but all we do is extract them and sell them. Imagine for example that we sell a ton of iron ore to Japan for 2000 or 3000 dollars. You know what happens next? We buy it again in the form of electronics and cars for millions of dollars. Why? We have the material, and we have the manpower.... but unfortunately we are crippled by laziness. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to ask Allah and say, "O Allah! I seek Your protection from anxiety and sorrow, and I seek Your protection from helplessness and laziness." The companions used to say that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) frequently mentioned this supplication. One day he walked into the mosque and saw a companion sitting there even though it wasn't the time for prayer. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) asked him why he

was sitting there and he complained about his debts. So Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) told him to get up and taught him this supplication. In other words, if you are in debt, don't just sit there, seek Allah's protection from laziness and helplessness and do something to change your situation.

You find in the Quran verses that tell you to get up and do something... move, don't be lazy, **"O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if you but knew!" (62:9)**. And then what? The next verse says, **"And when the Prayer is finished, then may you disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah." (62:10)**.

"It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes." (67:15). All these verses are telling us to be active. We need to be more **productive**.

At the beginning of Prophet Muhammad's Prophethood, night prayer was an obligation on all Muslims, and then it was reduced to a voluntary act of worship with a great reward. Listen to the verse in which Allah explains the reasons for this, **"He knows that there may be (some) among you in ill-health; others traveling through the land, seeking of Allah's bounty; yet others fighting in Allah's Cause, therefore read as much of the Qur'an as may be easy (for you)." (73:20)**. Allah considered it so important that Muslims would be able to get enough rest before going to their jobs the next morning, He reduced night prayer from an obligation to a voluntary act of worship. This is how much Islam values being **productive** in your work.

Hundreds of verses in the Quran have the motif **"believe and work righteousness"**. Think about "work righteousness" in a broad sense. Isn't the physician that is taking care of people with the intention of easing the pain of Allah's creation, isn't he doing "righteousness"? Isn't the architect that is making sure that the buildings are stable and safe with the intention of preserving lives and keeping people safe, isn't he doing "righteousness"? Isn't the farmer that is working with the intention of providing people with good and healthy food, isn't he doing "righteousness"? The concept of doing righteous deeds is a wide concept.

Listen to Allah when he address Prophet David (Dawood) saying, **"Work sons of David, with thanks!" (34:13)**. Allah is telling them, I don't want you to thank me only with your tongue, I want actions and work that shows your gratitude! Allah says in another verse, **"And say: 'Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers.'" (9:105)**. When we were talking about the importance of science and knowledge, we said that the first word revealed to this Ummah was **"Read"** yet we don't read. This time I'm saying that the Quran is full of verses that tell us to work and be **productive**, yet we are lazy. This needs to change. We need to increase our output! We need to innovate and be creative! Don't work for the salary, work for the Ummah! If that's your intention, then Allah will reward every second of work. Brothers and Sisters, you could transform your working hours into good-deeds! Every page you read, every nail you hammer, every signature, is worth a good deed if your intentions are correct! It's all about intentions, a state of mind. All you have to do is a little mental effort to modify your intentions. Pause for a second before going to work and sincerely say, "I will work for the welfare of the Ummah", and rest assured that you will be rewarded for every minute of work.

Look at the companions, they all had jobs and were **productive**. Do you think that all they did was sit next to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) all day? Of course not. Take Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) for example, he used to say that he had a piece of land he used to cultivate with another companion. They would alternate each day, one of them would work in the field and the other would go learn from Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and the next morning they would meet to discuss what the Prophet (pbuh) taught and what happened in the field. See how balanced they were? Another beautiful example is Abu Bakr (rAa). Abu Bakr, gave out all his wealth, all of it, for the sake of Islam three times during his lifetime. Once during the migration to Medina, once to fund the campaign that was going out to fight the Romans in Tabook, and

once to fund the armies that were defending Islam after the death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). How could he have done that if he didn't work hard to earn that money back? He must have been a genius to build his wealth from no money at all to enough money to spend for the sake of Islam and make a difference. He was a **productive** man. Uthman ibn Affan (rAa) was a brilliant merchant, he spent so much money for the Muslims and did so many good things for Islam with his money that thousands of warriors couldn't do on the battlefield. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) one day was so impressed by how much money Uthman was spending for Islam he said, "Nothing Uthman does after today could ever harm him." He meant that because he has given so much, Allah would forgive him for anything he did. How could he have reached such a state of wealth if he wasn't a **productive** and active Muslim? Abdurahman ibn Awf (rAa) was also a brilliant merchant. Wherever he went he could make a deal and earn money, he was brilliant. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) used to remark at this saying, "If he would lift a rock, he would find a piece of gold under it!" All these examples are companions from the 10 *mubashareen beljannah*. They were amongst the ten companions that were given glad tidings during their lifetime that they will enter Paradise. They were successful Muslims in this world and in the next.

Listen to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) encouraging Muslims to get engaged in business, "An honest trustworthy merchant is with the Prophet, Martyrs, and Righteous (in Paradise)." Listen to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) encourage Muslims to get engaged in agriculture, "Whoever plants a plant from which an animal, bird or human eats from, his sins will be forgiven with every fruit eaten from it." Even in industry and other types of work that require physical effort, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Whoever sleeps tired from the work he did, he sleeps with his sins forgiven." If you go to sleep at night tired from the effort you made all day at work, your sins will be forgiven! But don't forget to have the proper intentions! Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said, "Verily Allah Loves the believer that is an expert in his job." The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) once met a man whose hands became very harsh and rough because of work. He held his hand and said, "This is a hand that Allah Loves." See how much Islam encourages work and **productivity**??

Omar ibn Al-Khattab (rAa) once did something very interesting. When he was the Caliph, he used to go to the mosque at times when there would be no prayers. He once saw a group of people and he asked them why they were sitting there. They replied, "We are asking Allah to provided us with sustenance." So Omar (rAa) rebuked them saying, "Nobody should sit like this and ask Allah for sustenance, the sky doesn't rain gold or silver!" Omar ibn Al-Khattab himself used to say, "I would not like to die except in one of two positions; either fighting in the path of Allah, or working for my sustenance." See how clear the concept of **productivity** is in Islam?

Unfortunately, we confused some Islamic terms. We think that *Tawakul* or "leaving all affairs in the Hands of Allah" means that we could just sit there and Allah would solve all our problems. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "If you have true *tawakul*, Allah will provide you the way He provides birds. They leave their nests hungry and return full." What did the birds do? They left their nest, they didn't just sit there waiting for the sky to rain seeds or for worms to crawl up to their nest, they made an effort while knowing that the outcome is only in Allah's Hands. Don't just sit there, have true *tawakul*, make a true sincere effort leave the rest to Allah.

There was a righteous Muslim from the early generations and he was a very successful businessman. Aside from being successful, he loved dedicated time to worship Allah. This passion kept on developing until he once decided to stop working and just dedicate all his time to worshipping. So he went out into the desert one day and he saw a blind crippled bird. He wondered to himself how it could survive, but then he saw another bird coming with food and feeding it and going back and forth doing that. He happily said to himself "This must be a sign from Allah that I could stop working and devote my time to worshipping and He will still provide me." He went to Ibrahim ibn Adham, a famous scholar, and told him what happened. The scholar told him, "My brother, do you accept to be the blind crippled bird as opposed to the bird that was bringing it its food? My brother, the higher hand is better than the lower hand!"

O Muslims, have we accepted to be the blind crippled bird that needs to be fed in its mouth as opposed to the bird that feeds??? Verily the higher hand is better than the lower hand!

Another opposite misconception is that "*Al'amal 'a'abadah*" or "Working is a form of worship". Unfortunately this apparently correct phrase is misused and is considered as an excuse to work and skip obligatory prayers. No brothers and sisters, we need to be balanced, and we need to give everything its due portion because we are a balanced Ummah.

And for those who are unemployed I would like to propose to you something. If you can't find a job, sit with people of wisdom whom you trust like your parents, elders etc. Ask them what your community needs most and start gaining experience in that field. Its Ok if you spent so many years studying a particular field and will now changes. Look and see what your community needs and start learning how to work in that area instead of just sitting there and applying to the same jobs and getting the same rejections. Make a sincere effort and then ask Allah for help and that's when your call will be answered, for the sky doesn't rain gold or silver as Omar ibn Al-Khattab said.

Remember that **productivity** is part of our religion. We need to look at our jobs as a way of drawing nearer to Allah and benefiting our Ummah! Allah wants us to be **productive**. We need to be the feeding bird. We need to be the upper hand once again!

Step 20: Improving Our Manners and Perfecting Our Characters.

A very important element for our Ummah's rise is **Morality** and **Good Manners**. Let's face it; we have a problem today when it comes to **manners**. Some new converts to Islam say, "Alhamdulillah, I became a Muslim before visiting any Muslim country." What they mean is that our behaviors could be very discouraging and repelling. It's a painful sentence but it reflects the reality of many Muslims. Any civilization requires three essential factors to rise and maintain its status: the material factor, the spiritual factor, and the **moral** factor. The Islamic civilization was the only one to balance all three factors together and that's why it prevailed for over one thousand and three hundred years.

The Prince of Poets, Ahmed Shawky once said, "**Morals** keep a Nation alive. And so if their **morals** go, they go."

Do you know that how Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) summarized his message? He said, "**Verily, I have been sent to perfect noble character.**" The goal of his Prophethood was to perfect good manners and give us an example of perfect human behavior. This Hadith itself shows how excellent his noble character was. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) didn't say that he was sent to "establish" noble character, but instead he said to "perfect". It means that he is acknowledging the goodness already in people founded by previous prophets and righteous people and that he sees his role as just adding necessary final touches to make it perfect. This is how the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) summarized his message. This is how important morality is in our life.

Some people would say "But I expected that the goal of Prophet Muhammad's Prophethood was for mankind to know about Allah". Certainly, but how do we know about Allah (swt)? We do so by learning about His Names and Attributes. For example, from amongst His 99 Names are *Al-Haleem* (The Forbearing), *As-Saboor* (The Most Patient), *Al-Kareem* (The Generous), *Al-Wadood* (The Loving), *Ar-Ra'oof* (The Compassionate) and many others. But what does this have to do with our morals? We are required as Allah's servants to try our best to imitate Allah's Names and Attributes, while always bearing in mind that nothing is like Him and that He is far, far above and greater than all of His creations. We have to try our best to be generous, patient and loving, while always being aware that we are Allah's servants and nothing is comparable to Him.

Another person may say "But I thought that the goal of Prophet Muhammad's Prophethood was to teach us how to worship Allah". Of course, but the goal behind each and every type of worship we perform, is perfecting our characters. Take for example the 5 pillars of Islam. After bearing witness that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His messenger (*the shahada*), comes establishing prayers, paying *zakat*, fasting Ramadan, and performing Hajj. Allah says about Prayers, "**And establish regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds**" (29:45). The Messenger of Allah said "He who his prayer (*salat*) doesn't prevent him from shameful and unjust deeds did not pray." Allah says in a Hadith Qudsi "**I only accept prayers from he who has mercy upon the poor, the wayfarer, the widow and the injured**" If your prayers didn't install in you these qualities and feelings, then you really didn't pray, you were just moving up and down, but you didn't benefit from the prayers.

The same thing applies to *zakat*. Allah says, "**Of their goods, take alms, that so you might purify and sanctify them**" (9:103). Purification here means to rid the believers from their ill behaviors and manners, in other words, to perfect their characters. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "Smiling in the face of your brother is an act of charity (*sadakah*), and your enjoining of good and forbidding of evil is a *sadakah*, and guiding a person that is not familiar with the area is a *sadakah*, and seeing for a person that can't see, is a *sadakah*". As if the goal behind giving a *sadakah* is improving your character! The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said "The best type of *sadakah*, is a man feeding his wife in her mouth"! Treating your

wife with love and care is a *sadakah*. He also said "And pouring water from your bucket to your brother's is a *sadakah*" Giving your brother water is a *sadakah*! and all these things help us improve our characters.

The same concept applies to fasting. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Fasting is not only to restrain from food and drink, fasting is to refrain from obscene (acts). If someone verbally abuses you or acts ignorantly towards you, say (to them) 'I am fasting; I am fasting.'" As if the day you fast is the day you train yourself to improve your **manners**, a day that helps you perfect your **character**.

Another example is Hajj. Allah (swt) says, "**For Hajj are the months well known. If any one undertakes that duty therein, Let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj.**" (2:197). As if Hajj is an intensive training period for you to improve your **manners** and **character**. 10 days of **good manners**. If someone steps on your foot in the crowd or bumps you over, you remind yourself instantly that you are in the Hajj and your **manners** must be at their highest and you remember the Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says, "Whosoever performed Hajj only for Allah, did not become intimate with women and did not commit any disobedience, he will return home pure (of sins) as he was on the day he was born."

Have you seen how prayers, fasting, *zakat*, and Hajj all are supposed to result in an improvement in our **manners** and **character**, and that's why Prophet Muhammad said, "Verily, I have been sent to perfect noble character."

The main purpose of Allah's messages throughout history is installing morality and good manners in mankind. That's why Allah (swt) said to Prophet Moses (pbuh), "**Go to Pharaoh for he has indeed transgressed all bounds, and say to him, 'Have you a desire to purify yourself? and that I guide you to your Lord, so you may fear Him?'"** (79:17). As if purifying him from inside and helping him know his Lord are two sides of the same coin.

Another example is when Ja'far ibn Abi-Talib was standing in front of the Negus, King of Abyssinia explaining to him what Islam was. The Negus asked, "What is this religion wherein you have become separate from your people, though you have not entered my religion nor that of any other of the folk that surround us?" Ja'far replied, "O King, we were people steeped in ignorance, worshiping idols, eating unsanctified carrion, committing abominations, and the strong would devour the weak. Thus we were, until Allah sent us a Messenger from out of our midst, one whose lineage we knew, and his veracity and his worthiness of trust and his integrity. He called us unto God, that we should testify to His Oneness and worship Him and renounce what we and our fathers had worshiped in the way of stones and idols; and he commanded us to speak truly, to fulfill our promises, to respect the ties of kinship and the rights of our neighbors, and to refrain from crimes and from bloodshed."

The first thing that Ja'far did was that he described the state of immorality they were in before Islam. The second thing was that he introduced the Messenger of Allah as a person with a noble character, and then he told the Negus all the things that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught them, and they all were things that encouraged morality and good manners. Ja'far didn't even mention the forms of worship or rituals in Islam, all he focused on was morality and believing in Allah alone.

What's the take home message from all this? Brothers and sisters, unfortunately we have separated between worship and good manners. There are examples of Muslims that practice all the rituals on time and memorize Quran, but have bad manners. Another example is the one of a sister that insists on wearing the Hijab, but at the same time has very bad manners. On the other hand, there is the opposite extreme of a non-practicing Muslim that has a very noble character. Both examples are rejected and both examples give a false impression of Islam. We need to balance between both of these aspects; practicing Islam in the form of rituals and acquiring knowledge and also in the form of good manners.

Lets talk more about the strong link between Belief (*Eeman*) and Morality (*Akhlaq*). The Messenger of Allah said "By Allah, he has no faith! By Allah, he has no faith! By Allah, he has no faith!". The Companions asked "Who O Messenger of Allah?" to which he replied, "Whose neighbor is not safe from his trouble". How is your relationship with your neighbors? Do you turn the music on so loud that they are annoyed? Do you barbeque in the evening and make their mouth water yet never offer them some? Do you harm them with your garbage? Take care! the Messegner of Allah said "By Allah, he has no faith!" Treat your neighbor with good manners so that your faith may be complete. See the correlation between faith and good manners? A woman was mentioned to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that she prays and fasts but she harms her neighbors. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "She is in the Hell Fire". On the other hand, when another woman was mentioned to the Prophet (pbuh) that she only prays the obligatory prayers and fasts in Ramadan but doesn't harm her neighbors, he said, "She is in Paradise". Can you imagine how serious it is?

Prophet Muhammd said, "Modesty and Faith (*Eeman*) are paired together. If one of them is removed, the other is removed as well". If you don't have modesty then you don't have proper *Eeman*. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "He who has no integrity and honesty, has no *Eeman* and who can't keep his word, has no *Deen*". See how they are tightly linked? The Messenger (pbuh) said "Faith has more than seventy branches. The supreme branch is the statement that 'There is no god except Allah, and the lowest branch is the removal of obstacles from the path. And modesty is a branch of faith.'" So if you are driving on a highway and see a torn tire in the middle of the road and you pull over and remove it, that's a sign that you have Faith. Not only that, but modesty itself is a branch of Faith. The Prophet (pbuh) once asked his Companions, "Do you know who is broke?" To which they replied, "Whoever has no money". But the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) corrected them saying, "A broke person is he who comes on the Day of Judgment with prayers, fasting and zakat, but had swore at this person, and unjustly took the money of that person, and so this one takes from his good deeds, and that one takes from his good deeds. And when his good deeds are finished, the bad deeds will be taken from those whom he had harmed and dumped onto him and he was then dumped into the Hell Fire!". From over 14 centuries ago, the Messenger of Allah warned us of the unbalanced, mutated example of a Muslim.

How are we doing when it comes to morality and good manners? Sister, you have taken a great step forward and wore the Hijab, but how are your manners? Please don't give a bad example of a Muslim.

A Muslim is like a tree. The tree is watered and nourished by worshiping Allah and obeying Him, and the resulting fruits are good manners. Islam spread in Asia mainly because of the good manners of the merchants that were traveling there. People were amazed by their manners and when they found out that its because of Islam, they embraced Islam. Do you think that our manners today will attract non-Muslims to Islam? Be honest! Imagine if Muslims today once again had amazing manners, imagine how the West would react. They would no longer be able to propagate misconceptions about Islam because non-Muslims will be seeing true good examples of Muslims everyday. Each one of us must be a walking Media station that advertises for Islam by improving his or her manners. Your good actions and behavior could have a greater effect than hours of talking about Islam.

In the Quran, when Allah described his servants, does He only describe them as people who only perform rituals, but also those with good character. In the following verses you will see that Allah mentions a characteristic related to rituals followed by one related to morals.

"The believers must (eventually) win through, Those who humble themselves in their prayers [ritual]; Who avoid vain talk [morality]; Who are active in deeds of charity [ritual];" (23:1-5).

In another example Allah says, ***"And the servants of (Allah the) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they***

say, "Peace!" [morality]; Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrate and standing [ritual]; Those who say, "Our Lord! Avert from us the Wrath of Hell, for its Wrath is indeed an affliction grievous, "Evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in" [ritual]; Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes) [morality]; Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god [ritual], nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit fornication [morality]; - and any that does this (not only) meets punishment. (But) the Penalty on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy, Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, And whoever repents and does good has truly turned to Allah with an (acceptable) conversion; Those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable [morality]; Those who, when they are admonished with the Signs of their Lord, droop not down at them as if they were deaf or blind; And those who pray, "Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous." [ritual]; Those are the ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven, because of their patient constancy: therein shall they be met with salutations and peace" (25:63-75).

Listen to this, its very powerful. The Messenger of Allah said...

"There is nothing in the Balance heavier than the good morals. Indeed the person of good morals will reach by them the rank of the person of fasts and prayers."

"The most perfect believer in faith is the one who is best in moral character. The best of you are those who are the best to their spouses in manners."

"The closest one of you to me on the Day of Judgment, is the one with the best manners."

Do you want to be the Prophet's neighbor in Paradise? Improve your character and manners and it will happen! Do you want your good deeds to be very, very heavy in the Balance on the Day of Judgment? Improve your character and manners. Do you want to perfect your faith? Improve your character and manners.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "The most thing that lets people into Paradise is good manners." It's such an important aspect of Islam; morality and good manners are things that we cannot live without as Muslims. Our beloved Prophet (pbuh) said, "Indeed the believer by his good morals reaches the ranks of those who spend the whole night in prayer and whole day in fasting."

Dear brothers and sister, lets learn how to improve our manners, lets try to perfect our characters. We need this as an Ummah, our Ummah needs us to improve our manners if we really want to rise up once again. There is hope my dear brothers and sisters. We were just talking about the importance of giving sincere advice. Lets give each other sincere advice to improve our manners. Lets explain to our brothers and sisters the importance of good manners in Islam. Don't be passive, do something for Islam, do something for your Ummah. Be an admirable example of a Muslim.

The Final Step: Define Your Goal In Life

We've gone through 20 steps we must take. Steps in spirituality, material life and morality. A collection of steps in every aspect of life that if we change and fix, Allah will fulfill His promise and change our overall situation. Some is asking "When?" Allah replies, **"It may well be soon"** (17:51)

The final step that we need to seriously think about is related to every single Muslim. Each Muslim needs to define a goal in his or her life. This step is the best way to end this series. If i ask you "What's your goal in life?" will you automatically answer with a clear goal? or will you start to think, scratch your head, look at the ceiling and at the ground? Or will you say anything just to show that you have a goal? Relax, i can't see you now, you're behind your screen. So let me ask you "What's your goal in life?"

Among the steps we talked about was seriousness (Step 6). If you have a goal in life, you will be serious.

We talked about perfection (Step 8). if you have a goal in life, you will try to achieve perfection.

We talked about knowledge (Step 17). if you have a goal in life, you will search for knowledge in order to make your dream come true and accomplish your goal.

We talked about the importance of productivity in Islam (Step 19). if you have a goal in life, you will be productive.

We talked about investing time (Step 11). If you have a goal in life, you will value time and never waste it.

We talked about humility and humbleness in front of Allah (Step 1). If you have a clear goal in life, you will always be begging Allah for His help and assistance. We talked about abandoning disobedience (Step 3). If you have a goal in life, you will think twice before committing a sin because you fear that it will cause Allah to make your goal unachievable.

Do you think that we just came to this world to eat, drink, mate and die? How can a Muslim not have a goal in life? Having a goal in life is essential for every single Muslim. How old are you? 22? What's your goal? What? How could you now know? You are in midst of your years of energy and activity, are you going to waste it? You have to have a clear goal, write it down hang it over your bed. I want to be the best architecture in the world so that I could be a good example of a successful Muslim. I want to direct a famous sporting club so that I could help all its members draw closer to Allah. I want to be a novelist, I want to be....

What's your goal??

I'll tell you a story. There was a person that had no goal in life. When he was young he used to cry every time his parents took him to school, but that's OK, he was still young. Then when he grew a little, he used to never study and do his homework until his parents would tell him to do so. The years went on. He graduated from high school without an idea of what to do next but because everyone goes to the University, he went. He chose a school not based on his interests, but based on his high school grades. He studied for four years and when he graduated he was told that people with who graduate from this school with these grades, work in this company, so that's what he did. He didn't choose the company, his grades did. When he started to work he started to get paid, so he decided to get married, but why? Because everyone gets married. So he got married just for that reason, and of course they had children so he worked harder to earn more money, and then he died.

The End

How many Muslims in our Ummah is this man?

I feel very sad when i see young Muslims that receive the best education and go to the best universities, but have no goal in life. Life without a goal is a miserable life, a boring life, and a worthless life. Human beings weren't created to just eat, drink, sleep and mate... other creatures were created for that, but not human beings. A human being must have a goal in his or her life.

In many school in the West, as early as when the children are seven years old, they have a session every week for them to express their goals in life. At first the child doesn't understand what it means to have a goal, but by time they start to become aware and start to think and imagine. Every week someone stands up and explains his or her dream, and when the year is over, the teachers send to the parents explaining the goal their child chose so that they could help develop it during the summer. Then the next year the children explain what they did during the summer to achieve their goals.

Dear parents, your responsibility isn't just to feed your children and wake them up for the bus. You have an important and noble responsibility to explore and discover your child's talents and foster it. You must provoke your child to think of his or her goal and help them achieve it.

Whenever a company is started, the first thing they do is define the mission. The mission is the most important thing a company owns because its what keeps it on track. A company like SONY when it started, it defined its mission as "That the Japanese product becomes the number one product world wide". SONY never makes a decision or takes a step unless it helps accomplish their mission. What about you, what's your mission? What's your goal in life? Why are you marrying this person? Is it because he's cute and cool, or because you'll help one another other achieve your goals in life?

Think about it and ask yourself, "1.3 billion Muslims, how many of them have a goal in life?" ***"Verily Allah will never change the condition of a people until they change themselves" (13:11).***

I personally think that the four most important steps i mentioned were investing time, knowledge and education, productivity and this one... defining your goal in life. One would ask, "What about repentance, abandoning sins, and humility in front of Allah?". Yes, I agree with you that they are important, but unfortunately, Muslims have an unbalanced and fragmented understanding about Islam and that's why I want to emphasize these four steps. The Ummah won't rise unless we become balanced and address our spiritual as well as our worldly needs. Defining your goal in life is essential for every Muslim. You can't let your life tell you where to go, you have to tell it where to go! Don't let your life tell you what to do! You tell it what you want to do!! After you finish reading this sit with yourself and think about your goal in life. Companies spend weeks thinking about their mission and you can't sit with yourself for an hour to do so? Even though a company has all the money it needs for its start-up, even though they have the technology they need to produce their products, they don't announce their existence until the mission is finalized. Don't waste another day without having a goal in life! Even if you are 40 years old, or even 65! Don't waste another day of your life without a goal!

Let me give you some help. To answer the question "What's your goal in life", you have to first ask yourself another question, "Why was I created?". Isn't that the logical sequence? Even this essential and instinctive question is without an answer for many Muslims. Scientists, intellectuals, and philosophers spent their lives trying to answer this question and it was only Islam that answered it in a straightforward and clear way. Plato for example thought and thought until he reached to the wrong conclusion that God created the universe and then forgot about it, and that's why there are wars and misery everywhere. But Allah replies strongly, ***"And never does your Sustainer forget (anything)"(19:64).*** Karl Marx kept on thinking and thinking until he finally concluded wrongly that God wanted to play

so He created mankind to have fun with them. But once again, Allah replies clearly, ***"Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us? (Know) then, (that) God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth!" (23:115,116).*** Then came Ilya Abu-Madi, a poet, and said,

I came, I don't know from where, but I came.
And I saw a path in front of me, so I walked.
And I will continue to walk, whether I like it or not.
Where did I come from? I don't know.
And where am I heading? I know not.

How many of us feel these lines? How many of us are lost like Ilya? But Allah says to those who are lost and don't know their purpose in life, ***"And I have not created the Jinns and man to any end other than that they may (know and) worship Me" (51:56).*** Therefore, the purpose of our creation is to know the existence of Allah, and hence to consciously submit to Him and live our lives according to His will and plan! One may ask, "Does this mean that Allah created us so that we spend the whole day worshiping Him by praying, and fasting? I can't do that, I have school and work to do.". No brothers and sisters, "to worship" doesn't mean to spend all day praying and fasting, you could live a normal life, you're going to go out, go to work, meet your friends, play sports, get married, be happy, pray... but at the end, you're always saying to Allah, "I'm living for Your pleasure"... "I'm working, to develop my Ummah, for Your pleasure". "I'm going to get married to give birth to children that will worship You". Live your life in a normal way but always remind yourself by saying, "I belong to Allah!", "I'm living my life to please You". "I'm going to be successful in this world and use my success to obey You!". Sister, why are you getting married? Make your intention that you want to start a family that will obey Allah, that you want to give birth to a child that would worship Allah and live to please Him, that you will raise your children to become successful and useful Muslims. If that's your intention, then every effort you make will be rewarded, every meal you feed, every diaper you change, everything you do for this purpose will be rewarded, and you will be applying the verse and living your life for Allah's pleasure.

Why do you want to have a fortune? Make your intention that you will use this money to spend it in the path of Allah, to raise my children in a good way and educate them well. I want to have a fortune so that people would see me and say "Wow, he's rich and at the same time he is a practicing Muslim!" and so they would love Islam because I was a good example. I want to be rich so that I could run projects that would provide working opportunities for the unemployed, and so that I could develop my Ummah. If that's your intention, then every effort you make, every contract you sign and every penny you spend will be a form of worship and will be rewarded, and you will be applying the verse and living your life for Allah's pleasure.

Now do you know why you were created? Great, now lets set a goal!

There are three types of goals; either its a poor goal, or its good goal but will eventually end and be wasted, or its a ambitious goal that never ends. Lets explain. First there's the poor goals. For example, a person that wants to date so and so, that's a poor goal. He's 18 years old (two years older than Usama ibn Zaid (rAa) when he lead the Muslim army) and all he could think about is going out with so and so. It's a goal, but its a poor one. I don't mean to insult you, but it really is a poor goal. She for example is living her life with the goal of being the most attractive girl on campus. It's a goal that she makes huge efforts to accomplish. She spends money on make up and clothes, spends hours in front of the mirror, its a goal.... but forgive me for saying that its a poor goal.

The second type of goals is a good goal, but is limited and will be wasted. For example, a mother that wants to raise her children so that they would be educated. Of course this is a good goal in life and an admirable one, but the day will come when your children will graduate and your goal will be over. When you're 65 your children will be married and independent, but where is your goal? It ended the day they graduated. Any goal that is linked to this world will eventually end. So what's the solution? The solution is to link your goals with

the Eternal so that your goals would last forever! If you raise your children so that they are successful and useful Muslims to please Allah, then this goal will never end. Even if they are educated and married, your presence in their life will still be part of your goal. Even when you die, because your goal was linked to Allah, you will enter Paradise forever and benefit from the fruits of your goal. If you want to be a chemist for the sake of your Ummah's welfare so that Allah would be pleased with you, every step you make in that direction will be rewarded until the day you die. Make your goal a big one; make your goal an ever-lasting goal!

Lets look at some people that had big goals so that we could learn from them. I once met a young man, 18 years old, and I talked to him about the importance of having a goal in life. The next day I met him again and he told me that he had decided on a goal. When I asked him what it was he told me that he wanted to be the president of the sporting club we were sitting in (one of the biggest sporting clubs in Egypt). When I asked him why he said, "I love playing sports, and I love this club, so I intend to be an active member and basically 'live' here. I have lots of ideas like this and that, and I want to run for the elections and I plan on winning in shaa Allah. Once I become president I will do my best to get the youth more involved in sports instead of doing drugs and getting into violent gangs. I want this club to be a safe place for parents to bring their children, I want it to raise world champions! and I want to do it all for the pleasure of Allah!". That's an example of an 18 year old.

Another example is Omar ibn Abd-Elaziz. Omar had endless ambition, he once said, "I have an aspiring self, I once aspired to marry Fatima, the daughter of the Caliph and I married her. Then I aspired to become the governor of Medina, and so I became its governor. Then I aspired to become the Caliph of the Muslims, and so I became the Caliph! But now, what is there to aspire to? I aspire to enter Paradise!" Omar ibn Abd-Elaziz went through three phases. First all his concern was that his close would be soft enough to be tender on his skin, a small goal. Then his goals became good and challenging, but limited and all reached their ends. Then finally, he aspired for the never ending, he aspired for Paradise, and so he lived for Paradise!

Take Muhammad El-Fatih (Mehmet) for example, he was 23 years old when he lead the Muslim army and opened Constantinople. Ever since he was 15, he used to stare at the sea that separated him from that city and ride his horse and charge into the water. Why was he doing that? He knew it was his call... he was trying to cross the sea and make his dream come true. It was just 8 years later that he accomplished his goal. Look at the dreams and goals of Imam Bukhari. When he was 14 years old, he was sitting with several respected scholars and heard one of them telling the other, "The books of Hadith include both authentic as well as fabricated Hadiths, if only someone would separate them from each other". Imam Bukhari says, "And so it came to me, I, I would do it! And I lived to do it!" And he did it! And until this day, if any Hadith is said to be narrated by Bukhari, people are confident that it's authentic. Please don't live without a goal in your life. All the examples I gave were of Muslims, but let me give you some examples of some non-Muslims that had a goal in their life and accomplished it. Charlie Chaplin said that he dreamed to be the best in the film industry. Do you know what he used to do? He would go to sleep leaving the lights on and next to him would be a pencil and paper. Whenever an idea would come to him, even in his dreams, he would get up and write it down. You know what? I was reading Bukhari's biography and I found out that he used to do the same thing! He said, "I used to wake up more that twenty times in one night to write down a Hadith i remembered".

What's your goal? Will you be able to sit down and think about it? Don't forget to write it down when you've reached it. Scholars have set 7 conditions in order for a goal to be accomplished. Please write them down.

- 1- The goal must be clear and well defined, not ambiguous. It must be so clear that you can see its details in front of you. Remember the young man and his dream to direct that sporting club? He was imagining every single detail.
- 2- The goal must be ambitious and grand. Link it to Allah's pleasure so that it would be everlasting!

- 3- Never fear the difficulty of reaching this goal. The poet said, "And he who fears climbing the mountains, will live all his life in the ditches!!"
- 4- There must be a clear plan to accomplish this goal.
- 5- Make an enormous effort to accomplish your goal!!
- 6- You must have hope and optimism. Never doubt that you can make your dream come true.
- 7- You must have patience! Patience dear brothers and sisters.

Whoever takes these seven conditions in his consideration and follows them will see the fruits of his work and will accomplish his goals and dreams. If you do your part, Allah will grant you success. If you're not sure, read the biographies of great people throughout history and you will see that it works. Those who had a dream and lived for it and were patient, accomplished their goals and their dreams came true! It worked for them, and it will work for you.

Sit down and think of your goal, write it down and make it come true!

Translated by:



The English Convey