



Utrujj

Knowledge & Creativity

Shaykh Haytham Tamim's
commentary on

Al Ghazali's

**TWENTY RULES FOR
DEALING WITH PEOPLE**

From The Forty Principles of the Faith

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the final prophet of Allah,

Ghazali's 20 Rules for Dealing with People

*How Islam enables you to improve
your relationships and your life*

Delivered by Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Biography of Al Ghazali by Dr Musharraf Hussain, OBE

Transcribed by Ayesha Khan with thanks to Asma Husain

Edited by Hana Khan



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Introduction

This booklet is my commentary on Imam Ghazali's *Kitaab al-Arba'in fi Usul ad-Deen*, 'The Forty Principles of Faith', which he wrote before his death, as a summary of his legendary work *Ihya Ulum ad-Deen*, 'The Revival of the Religious Sciences', one of the greatest works on Muslim spirituality, and one of the most read works in the Muslim world, after the Quran.

Life is a journey to Allah which we do not pursue alone. We are not an island – we are surrounded by people, friends, family, colleagues, neighbours, those whom we employ and those whom we work for, and, fleetingly, those people we pass along the way. These interactions are fraught with a variety of sentiments – currents of emotion bubble up inside us which we have to channel carefully, and at the same time, we are beset by various inner drives that Allah Almighty created within us for good reason, but which we struggle to restrain.

An important part of this book is the chapter on dealing with people, which gives a clear breakdown of the principles which should underlie our interactions with others. It examines human tendencies, traits and the wayward drives within our own selves, which we must overcome in order to improve our behaviour and enhance our relationships. When we succeed, this ultimately leads to the betterment of our families and society.

Ghazali with masterful analysis condenses his advice into twenty rules on how to deal with others. Though there are many, he highlights the ones which he thinks are the priorities. I have expanded on his points and endeavoured to show how, almost a millennium later, they are still relevant to us today.

Rule 1. Love for others what you love for yourself

The very first rule is to put others on par with yourself. It is a lesson which puts us in our place. You have to *love for people what you love for yourself*, because you are not the centre of the universe. You live with others, so you need to get along with them and be able to accommodate them, warts and all.

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

By Him in whose hand is my soul, a servant of Allah does not believe perfectly till he loves for his brother what he loves for himself. [Bukhari & Muslim]

Do you love your brother what you love for yourself?

This is a very important and well-known hadith. What the Prophet (peace be on him) is saying here is that one cannot attain perfection in their imaan (faith), (or will not have complete imaan), until they love for their neighbour or brother what they love for themselves.

Islam is a social deen and this hadith encapsulates the importance of the social aspect of Islam. Islam is not a religion of individualism. It certainly looks after the individual; nurtures the individual and encourages the individual to reach his maximum potential, but it is not a self-centred religion. It is a society-centred religion; society is at the heart of our worship.

When we make du'a we do it in a plural form rather than in a singular form. We find this demonstrated in Surat al-Fatihah, which we repeat at least 17 times a day in salah, when we say 'Guide **us**', 'You alone **we** worship'. We do not say 'you alone I worship'. The use of the plural form brings the community together, binds hearts together and helps people fight their egoism and arrogance, which comes inbuilt in us.

By default, we are self-centred creatures, but Islam wants to rid us of this internal mechanism and reach beyond ourselves, to our fellow brothers and sisters, to our community, rather than to be trapped in own self, working for our own benefit and interests.

Islam takes the individual out of his shell and propels him into the small circle around him, and then the bigger circles beyond, of which the biggest circle is the circle of the Ummah and humanity.

In order to achieve perfection in your imaan you have to break the cycle of egoism and self-interest, and become altruistic towards your brother, neighbour and community as much as you love for yourself. What restricts you from perfection is your ego. The more we fight the selfishness we all have, the higher our rank will be.

Highest level of faith

Putting others first is called *eethaar*. It is the highest level of devotion and sacrifice. You cannot advance to higher levels of spirituality and reward until you are prepared to make sacrifices. Sacrifice takes brings you closeness to Allah Almighty. The more you sacrifice, the closer you are to Allah Almighty, of course within the limits.

In the narration of Bukhari, when the Prophet (peace be on him) says, ‘None of you believes until you love for your brother what you love for yourself’, **brother** can be literally your brother in blood, or your brother in faith or your brother in humanity. The narration of this hadith in Muslim says ‘His imaan is not perfect until he loves for **people**’, he did not say his brother, because many interpreters and commentators always comment that ‘his brother’ only means his Muslim brother. This restricts goodness to Muslims alone. The Prophet (peace be on him) did not restrict it. When you put all the narrations together, you can see that he (peace be on him) is saying when you love for other people what you love for yourself, this will perfect your Islam.

Love for others what you love for yourself and you will be a mu'min (Ibn Majah)

The servant will not reach the highest level of imaan until he loves for people what he loves for himself. (Ibn Hibban)

Mu'adh ibn Anas reported:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "The best faith is to love for the sake of Allah, to hate for the sake of Allah, and to work your tongue in the remembrance of Allah."

Mu'adh said, "How is it, O Messenger of Allah?"

The Messenger (peace be upon him) said: That you love for the people what you love for yourself, and you hate for the people what you hate for yourself, and that you speak goodness or remain silent. [Musnad Ahmad]

Love is not restricted to ourselves, to our families or to fellow Muslim exclusively – no. You cannot be a good Muslim by just being good to yourself and to your community. Islam is not for just Muslims, it is for humanity. We tend to forget this, and think Islam is a special club just for us. Islam is greater than that. Islam is for everyone.

This is why the Prophet (peace be on him) is saying you can no perfect your imaan until you love for others what you love for yourself. For instance, your neighbour. You live in close proximity to your neighbour - your doors, and walls are close to each other, if not adjoining, and you may see him every

morning. When you wish goodness for him, he will wish goodness for you. You will have a good relationship.

Volunteering in the community, not necessarily in the mosque is one way of demonstrating love for others. The more you get involved with projects, the more connected you are to others. The more it trains you to think of others. For instance, feeding the homeless, looking after elderly people, supporting green projects are worthwhile commitments. You can utilise your time by offering advice, teaching youngsters, listening to those who are going through difficulties or visiting the sick.

When you do something regularly or as part of group with your children, you impart important skills. When children see their mother or father doing such things, it teaches them social responsibility by example.

Living Islam is more powerful than preaching Islam

I once met a person in Spain when I was invited to deliver some talks in Granada. We met a new Muslim in his 80's or 90's. I asked him how did you come to Islam? He said I have Muslim neighbours and they always bring me food or if they are going on a picnic they always take me with them, they are kinder to me than my own family, so I became a Muslim. As simple as that. They did not preach to him or lecture him, or give him a pile of books on Islam; they demonstrated to him through their kindness what it meant to be a Muslim.

Islam is a religion of kindness. We ask Allah Almighty to enable us to always be people of goodness, deliver goodness, share goodness and to be good ourselves.

If you polish your heart and your intention, you will never lose, even if someone else has a bad intention towards you. We do not know for sure that they have a bad intention; only Allah knows their intention. What we have in our minds are assumptions, not facts. We like to believe that our assumptions are facts, but we may fail ourselves and later we might discover that we were wrong about someone and they never intended to harm us. Therefore, the default position of a Muslim is to love for others what we love for our self, and it is better to have a good opinion of others, than to doubt them.

You should not wish bad for others, as this reflects the lack of purity of your heart. If you wish bad things for others, it is a symptom of disease in your heart. Therefore, always wish for goodness for others, as the Prophet (peace be on him) said in yet another narration:

*Whoever is delighted by the thought of being far removed from Hell, then his wish will come true if he testifies that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger **and gives to people whatever he loves to be given to him.***

[Tabarani in al Mu'jam al-Awsat]

These narrations boost our level of imaan (faith).

Rule 2. Be humble

Each point that Ghazali highlights is showing us how to achieve a pure heart, whereas the opposite of each point is the symptom of a diseased heart. For instance, arrogance (*kibr*) is the opposite of humility (*tawadu*). *Kibr* is a major sin (*kaba'ir*). *Kibr* is deadly.

There are many verses which encourage people to avoid *kibr*, either through the external manifestation, like how to walk and talk and interact with others, or the internal, when you pass someone and think that you are better than them. They might be the best person in Allah's eyes.

Therefore, do not judge others. Do not look down on others. Do not think you are better than them. Allah does not like those who show off:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ
الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ
مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful. [4:36]

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

*Take what is given freely, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant.
[7:199]*

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“No one who has the weight of a seed of arrogance in his heart will enter Paradise.” [Muslim]

Rule 3. Respect elders and show mercy towards children

We have all witnessed the way in which youngsters disrespect elders in society around us. We need to educate our children about the importance of showing respect. Since many schools introduced the practice of calling teachers by their first name, this has decreased the esteem students felt for their teachers. It sends out the wrong message.

Islam taught us to be respectful towards our parents, elders and teachers, and have mercy towards youngsters.

Abdullah ibn Amr reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

“Whoever does not show mercy to our young ones, or acknowledge the rights of our elders, is not one of us.” [Musnad Ahmed]

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari narrated: “The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

Glorifying Allah involves showing honour to a grey-haired Muslim and to one who can expound the Quran, but not to one who acts extravagantly regarding it, or turns away from it, and showing honour to a just ruler.” [Abi Dawud]

“No youth treats an elderly person with honour in their old age except that Allah sends someone to treat them with honour in their old age.” [Tirmidhi]

Though the second hadith may be weak, the concept is in line with the principle in Islam of respecting elders.

Rule 4. Smile, be cheerful and easy going

Imam Ghazali mentioned the importance of being cheerful. When the Prophet (peace be on him) was described in the *Shama'il*, ('The Virtues of Muhammad' compiled by Tirmidhi), the companions said he was always optimistic with a smile on his face.

No one wants to be in the company of the one who is always frowning. Having a cheerful face is important. It is the first thing people see about you. My friend once encountered a man who looked quite grouchy in the mosque and said to him, 'The Prophet (peace be on him) said smiling is charity.'

'The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Smiling in your brother's face is an act of charity" [Tirmidhi].

The sour-looking man replied even more sullenly, 'I don't want to pay charity today!'

It is toxic to have a grumpy person around you. It poisons the atmosphere – whether it is in an office, or in the home, or in a shop. Do not be grumpy and say, 'This is the way I am!' Learn to be Mr Cheerful instead of Mr Grumpy. You can be Mr (or Mrs) Optimistic rather than Mr Pessimistic.

Moods are contagious. Frowns and smiles can either make everyone feel miserable or happy. When you smile at others, they smile back at you. It creates a positive atmosphere, and your feeling of cheerfulness is reflected back to you in others' faces. Whereas if you frown, your misery is increased, as it rebounds on you from the atmosphere you created around you.

In a beautiful hadith, the Prophet (peace be on him) described that Hell was not permitted to admit gentle people. He asked:

"Do you know what Hell is prevented from?"

The companions said: "Allah and His Messenger (peace be on him) are more knowledgeable."

He said: "It is prevented from the soft, gentle, easy-going, approachable person." [Ibn Hibban and Tirmidhi]

The Prophet (peace be on him) also said:

"Allah loves the easy-going, cheerful person." [Bayhaqi]

When you enter your home, or your place of work, or mosque, have a smile on your face, even beneath your mask! At least your eyes will be smiling, even if people cannot see your mouth. Look in the mirror, and assess if your expression looks approachable or unfriendly. The Prophet (peace be on him) was *sahlan* (easy going). He was the best of Allah's creation and he liked ease, within the boundaries.

Having ease in a meeting, during transaction or whenever communicating with others, facilitates it. The Prophet (peace be on him) made a du'a (supplication) for the one who shows mercy to others. Jabir bin `Abdullah narrated that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ رَجُلًا سَمَحًا إِذَا بَاعَ وَإِذَا اشْتَرَى وَإِذَا اقْتَضَى رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ

"May Allah's mercy be on him who is lenient in his buying, selling, and in demanding back his money." [Bukhari]

When you need to deal with a government department, in any country, when they make things simple and straightforward you feel relieved, but when they keep making simple things difficult, it fills you with frustration and exasperation. We have all experienced those moments when we are put on hold, and go round in circles, or get passed from department to department as if we are trapped in a nightmare. The Prophet (peace be on him) made du'a against those who utilise their position to create ease or difficulty.

اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا فَشَقَّ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاشْتُقْ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ وَلِيَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي شَيْئًا فَرَفَقَ بِهِمْ فَارْفُقْ بِهِ

O Allah, cause distress to him who has any charge over my people and made things difficult for them, and be gentle to him who has any charge over my people and made things easy for them. [Muslim]

It is some people's nature that they don't like to make things easy, while some people go out of their way to help you and remove your burden from your shoulders. Du'a comes easily from your heart to your tongue for such people.

Making things difficult for others, makes you are sinful for. The Prophet (peace be on him) said *Wa yasiru wa la tua'siru*.

بَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنْفِرُوا وَيَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا

"Gladden people and do not scare them; make things easy and do not make them difficult." [Bukhari and Muslim]

Give good news, not bad news

Some people specialise in giving bad news, while others sprinkle sunshine on others.

Allah Almighty loves the person who is easy-going and cheerful. Train yourself to be cheerful. These are *hasanaat* (good deeds) which are easy to acquire, like *al-ghanimatul baridah* (cold booty). Instead of earning them the hard way on the battlefield, you can pile them up by simply being cheerful.

'Amir bin Mas'ud reported God's Messenger (peace be on him) as saying:

"Fasting in winter is booty gained without trouble (easy reward)."

[Ahmad and Tirmidhi]

The phrase *al-ghanimatul baridah* literally means 'the cold booty' because in the winter one does not suffer from hunger and thirst as in summer. Fasting in winter is considered cold booty, because the day is shorter and the nights are longer, so fasting is easier and at night you have a longer time to rest and wake up and worship Allah through qiyam al layl. Such opportunities are low hanging fruit. Who would walk away from low hanging fruit, when it is so easy to grab? When you realise that cold booty is all around you, it makes you look at the world afresh. Being cheerful and smiling is therefore cold booty. If you are not in the mood to be cheerful today, when will you be?

If you have a bad-tempered person in your midst, instead of resenting them, think of them as your chance to gain reward. When you realise that Allah placed them in your life, as a chance to reward you, your whole approach will change. Why are you feeling angry then? You do not feel annoyed by them as they are the means through which you can earn Allah's pleasure. Your day to day tasks will be less burdensome. If you have someone you know who is always late, and it irritates you, consider this as extra reward for being patient.

In a nutshell the cold booty is closer than you can imagine. It is how you view what you deal with on a daily basis. If you change the way you see it, instead of being a source of annoyance it can be very rewarding.

Of course this does not mean that you put up with unacceptable behaviour under the impression that it is rewarding. It is not. You must not accept abusive behaviour, or being in danger mentally, emotionally or physically.

Life's challenges are a training course to make you better. When you realise they have been sent by Allah to you, you will be more positive.

Rule 5. Reconcile people

Bringing together people who have fallen out is a huge service to them, society and humanity. *Sulhu khair* – reconciliation is better than having ongoing conflicts, grudges and hatred.

Even if it takes a bit of exaggerating and tweaking of the truth to bring about a softening of hearts and reconciliation between people, it is worth more reward than *nawafil* salah and fasting.

Abu Darda reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“Shall I not tell you of what is better in degree than extra fasting, prayer, and charity?” They said, “Of course!” The Prophet said, “Reconciliation between people. Verily, corrupted relations between people is the razor.” [Tirmidhi]

It is not sinful to pick out the good things either side said and relay it to those they fell out with, rather than the bad things they said, in order to bring an end to their dispute. This is because it benefits the whole family. The goodness of this radiates out to the community.

There are so many social rulings around bringing hearts together. Whether it is greeting one another with a smile, or saying salam, or not jeopardising someone else's deal – for instance by gazumping their house purchase, or proposing to their fiancée – in all scenarios, Islam encourages society to live in harmony with love, care and consideration for each other.

The very first khutbah delivered by the Prophet (peace be on him) in Madinah told believers to spread goodness, and this is one of the pillars of how to establish a good society:

‘Abdullah bin Salam said:

When the Prophet (peace be on him) came to Al-Madinah, the people rushed to meet him, and it was said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come! The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come! The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come!” Three times. I came with the people to see him, and when I saw his face clearly, I knew that his face was not the face of a liar. The first thing I heard him say was when he said: “O people! Spread (the greeting of) Salam, feed others, uphold the ties of kinship, and pray during the night when people are sleeping, and you will enter Paradise with Salam.” [Ibn Majah]

How do we deal with difficult personalities?

Try different ways to navigate the relationship. If you have a conflict with anyone, quite often it is over something petty. Once the ego has got involved, the issue becomes inflated. The more you leave it the more it grows and festers.

Tolerate them as best you can unless being with them causes you harm, or endangers you in any way. Present your point of view in a nice way where they don't feel challenged but at the same time you get the point across. You need to be creative; and it depends on the context, the personality of that person, on the circumstances etc. We try our best and ask Allah Almighty to give us the wisdom to show the truth in the way that He likes without troubling ourselves or putting anyone into hardship.

Rule 6. Don't listen to rumours

Ghazali tells us not to listen to rumours about others or to pass them on. We need this reminder because we are flooded by rumours, fabrications, lies and fake news. The Quran and Sunnah give us the formula for dealing with them. What should you do when you hear a piece of news? First, do not convey it. Second if it needs to be passed on it, check it first. Most of the time, it should not be passed on.

Marital conflicts caused by rumours

One cause of bad marital relations is when one spouse allows themselves to listen to people's comments. If you open your ears to other people or are driven by what people say and listen to their bad advice, which is very problematic, especially when they are ill-informed, not qualified and lack wisdom. I have witnessed this mess up people's marriages.

One way to bring reconciliation is to shut this door and to stop giving an ear to the wrong advice from the wrong people. If they do not have wisdom, simply do not listen to them.

Similarly, if there is gossip in the office, do not pass it on. If it is about an issue which needs resolving, then first authenticate the information. Many people have a big mouth and like to talk. People cannot control their tongues. For some, being told that they should not tell anyone gives them even more incentive to broadcast it.

Rumours can ruin lives. Stop them as soon as they reach you. Crush them under your shoe. Ghazali's words are as relevant today as they were in his time. The stories which circulated about the Aisha, (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (peace be on him), when she lost her necklace and got left behind, created speculations about her infidelity that had started as rumours. They were begun by a *munafiq* (hypocrite). As there were no borders or guidelines on how to treat rumours, they spread rapidly through the community. They were very destructive and caused a great deal of pain to Aisha, who was innocent, and hurt the Prophet (peace be on upon him) himself. Therefore Allah Almighty taught believers the principles of how to deal with rumours in Surat an-Nur.

In the workplace

When a headteacher or boss opens his office and invites his teachers or employees to come and backbite others, it leads to an evil environment. The gossip is spiced up and sprinkled with even more chillies and pepper, and it is a recipe for disaster.

Do not invite others to tell you what is going on in the office. Instead, tell your staff you do not want to hear it. Otherwise, the office becomes a cell where evil reproduces like a virus, and spreads and attacks the dignity of people. It can ruin any work environment in any organisation – department, hospital, school or office.

If you overhear something, do not pass it on. Do not say, 'I heard you are doing this, is it true?' This contributes to the evil. In the very authentic hadith, we were told that the person who spreads gossip will not be admitted to Jannah.

Hudhayfah reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"The talebearer will not enter Paradise."

"The gossip-monger will not enter Paradise." [Bukhari and Muslim]

This is not something we can take lightly. Usually we equate the sin that leads to Jahannam as *kufr* (disbelief) but the *no entry to Jannah* sign for gossip-mongers shows us the enormity of slandering others. Why does it carry such a huge penalty? Because gossip, backbiting and rumours are fatal weapons, which cannot be detected by any machine. This is why Islam put an end to them. This hadith means that the backbiter/slanderer will not be admitted to Jannah even if they are a believer, until they have received their punishment first and the scores are settled.

Even if you end up in Jannah eventually, spending a moment in Jahannam will be excruciating. May Allah protect us all from it. No one wants to be that person.

The Prophet (peace be on him) was deterring people from this because it destroys the community. It only takes a few words and they spread like poison. This is why backbiting and slander are a very dangerous disease.

The one who gossips to you will gossip about you

When you allow people to gossip with you, you allow them to carry your comments back to others. Do not open the floodgate to gossips. They will drown you with them. Conversely, if you stand up for those who are being gossiped about, you earn a great deal of reward.

Abu Darda reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"Whoever defends the reputation of his brother, Allah will defend his face from the Hellfire on the Day of Resurrection." [Tirmidhi]

What can you talk about if you don't gossip?

We have unconsciously fallen into patterns of conversation, and we need to revisit and reprogram what we discuss with each other. If gossip is the main chunk of your conversation with others, you need to replace it by good bits of news you have acquired instead. Whether you pass on the good things that you have learned, or that have happened in your life, or in your family or in the news, it means you need to look out for this positive piece of news and store them in your mind to share later. Imagine the powerful effect this positivity would have on us and society, if everyone passed on good news instead of bad news and gossip. You might be interested in certain hobbies, like gardening or cooking. You may ask your mother for recipes, even if you do not plan to make them, just to give them the opportunity to teach you something.

Rule 7. Do not be estranged for more than three days

Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

"Do not desert (stop talking to) one another, do not nurse hatred towards one another, do not be jealous of one another, and become as fellow brothers and slaves of Allah. It is not lawful for a Muslim to stop talking to his brother (any Muslim) for more than three days." [Bukhari and Muslim]

When you fall out with your brother and you have a disagreement, you are not allowed to avoid him for more than three days. We need to learn how to empty our hearts of rancour and fill our hearts

with mercy and love. The heart which is full of hatred because it was wronged, keeps rewinding bad memories. When it sleeps it is haunted by these memories. It can be any number of people who cause you upset. We need to stop rewinding bad memories. It is unhealthy and can push you into depression. Press delete, and go into the recycle bin and delete it from there as well.

In another narration, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) stated that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

"Whoever accepts back what he sold to a Muslim, Allah will forgive his fault."

[Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah]

The original hadith is referring to a financial transaction, where one person reneges on a deal. For instance, if a customer insists on returning something he agreed to buy, the hadith tells us that the salesman who takes back the goods he did not have to accept, and thus accommodates the customer, will have Allah's pardon when he needs it the most.

In a more general sense, it means that if you forgive the mistakes of others, Allah will forgive yours.

Abdullah ibn al-'As reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"Show mercy and you will be shown mercy. Forgive and Allah will forgive you."

[Musnad Ahmad and Bukhari in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad]

Three days to cool down

It is intriguing that Allah gave us three days to recover from an argument. It is definitely worth researching the physiological and psychological changes that occur during these days. When someone has an argument, it would be worth observing what happens in their mind and nervous system, and to their hormones, blood pressure and heart, etc. over three days. I am sure there is deep wisdom in this timing.

If you notice your own reactions, when someone says something hurtful you, have that first hit of shock and humiliation, and embarrassment when realising that they could behave this way towards you. It could be the feeling that you didn't deserve to be treated that way: *how could they think of you that way, after everything you've done, is that how they are going to repay you? That's rich coming from them... have they taken a look at themselves? You could say a million things about them...*

Those hormones flood us, and make it quite hard to get a grip of ourselves in that moment. Moreover the action-replay is triggered in our mind. We repeat that conversation over and over again. Whether it was a message or a comment, or a full-blown argument, we select the most hurtful bits and keep rewinding them. Then we start having that internal conversation with ourselves, when we say a hundred things that we wish we had said at the time, and we keep refining that narrative and rote-learning it. We do not give the other person the benefit of the doubt.

Yet we do not stop to think that we are expecting a level of perfection from them that we do not always display ourselves. We have bad days; we can be off-hand, moody; rushed, and not give someone full attention. It is certainly hard to give everyone the time we would like to.

By then, we are stewing in our juices - wallowing in self-pity. Feeling the victim, feeling bruised. Even when we might think that Allah destined for us to have this altercation, we still can't forgive the other person for the words they chose.

Deadline

Allah Almighty gives us the grace period to recover our equilibrium. He knows we are creatures brimming with emotions. He knows we struggle to keep them in check. Allah puts a maximum limit on how long we can wallow in anger, sadness and self-pity. If there were no limit, we could continue feeling aggrieved ad infinitum.

Some people do not forgive those who wrong them, even after three years or thirty years. However, Allah Almighty has not told us to recover instantly, but given us a grace period to cool down, regulate and re-stabilise our emotional state. It is not in our interests to let our anger and hurt linger. This is why we have been given limits. We work better with a deadline.

Forgiving liberates you

Those who dwell on their hurt, even when it happened decades ago, prolong their own suffering. They would have been much better off if they had started a new page. It would have brought them relief. When you cannot forgive others, you torture yourself. When you forgive, you set yourself free. You are no longer shackled by history. The crying has to stop.

When the hereafter becomes more of a reality, the dunya issues become petty. Otherwise, the peace you try so hard to create within yourself can be knocked out by just one word from someone.

Though we have all heard that forgiveness sets you free, it is very hard to put that into practice. The theory sounds great, and the reality is true, but we have to really fight ourselves to find that forgiveness inside us. It is a jihad. And that is why Allah has put so much reward in it.

It is better to clear the air by having that conversation sooner rather than later, after those three days, when you are calmer and cooler. If someone hurt your feelings and you are really struggling to let go of it, think 'I want Allah to forgive me. I don't want to be standing at the gates of Jannah, unable to enter because I could not forgive someone.'

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrated that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

"The believers, after being saved from the (Hell) Fire, will be stopped at a bridge between Paradise and Hell and mutual retaliation will be established among them regarding wrongs they have committed in the world against one another. After they are cleansed and purified (through the retaliation), they will be admitted into Paradise; and by Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, every one of them will know his dwelling in Paradise better than he knew his dwelling in this world."

In another hadith, there will be two men from this Ummah who will come before Allah.

One man will say, "So and so has transgressed against me and I want from his good deeds." Allah will tell him, "Do you see this great palace in paradise?" And the man will look at the palace, and Allah will say to him, "It will belong to you if you forgive your brother today." And the man will forgive him. The Prophet (peace be on him) said at the end of this hadith "Safeguard yourselves from Allah, and reform and reconcile amongst yourselves, indeed Allah will reconcile between the believers (on the Day of Judgment)." [Mustadarak al-Haakim]

In a sad, angry state you are vulnerable and make mistakes

The Shaytan hunts you in two states: when you are very angry, and when you are very sad. This is when your defences are down and your immunity to Shaytan plummets to its lowest level.¹

Just recall how you are when you are in this mode. I am sure that it is a time when we all make mistakes – either in our assumptions or in our words and actions. This is why it is very important to not allow anger to consume you and take over. If you need the time to lick your wounds and process the hurt, take it, but after three days, pick yourself up. Forgive. Forget. Move on.

If someone wronged you but then comes and apologises, and they sincerely regret what they did, forgive them. Do not refuse because you are still hurt, angry and bruised.

It is best to be slow to get angry but fast to cool down, and to stay silent in between. Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) described people's different positions:

Among them is the slow to get angry, the quick to calm. Among them is the quick anger and the quick to calm, so this is with that. Behold! Among them is the quick get angry and the slow to calm, and indeed the best of them is the slow to get angry and the quick to calm, and the worst of them is the quick get angry and the slow to calm. [Tirmidhi]

The windows to shaytan

There are three main windows that let Shaytan in: anger, sadness, and fear. When you are controlled by your emotions, then Shaytan dictates to you what to do and what to say. Often, when you have calmed down afterwards, you regret what you said and did.

The second window to Shaytan is sadness, which can even lead to physical and mental illness: extreme sadness can even cause a stroke or diabetes. 'Normal sadness' is part of our nature. Indeed, someone who is never sad is not normal. However, deep sadness which paralyses you is not good. Shaytan can easily prey on you when you are sad. Similarly in a state of fury, you can say wild things.

The third window Shaytan can prey on you through is fear. It can lead to imaginary fears being magnified beyond all probability. Shaytan floods you with all the alarming scenarios in the world. When someone has the possibility of bad news, their imagination can run wild – especially mothers, whose fears can escalate within moments to the very worst outcome.

Be the first to end the dispute

This is why we are given incentives and encouragement to move on. Whether you pick up the phone or go round and clear the air, Allah loves the one who ends the dispute.

"It is not permissible for a person to desert his fellow brother for more than three days while they continue to meet and turn their backs to each other. And the best of them is the first to say Salam." [Bayhaqi]

The incentive of akhirah is much greater than the pain you feel in dunya

In any dispute it is important to keep reminding ourselves of the akhirah. When we link our dunya with our akhirah, it puts everything in perspective. Remember that the most painful scenario is the day of resurrection: that is when you will need relief. Where will that relief come from? From the occasions you relieved people in dunya Allah. For that, Allah will relieve you in akhirah.

¹ <https://www.utrujj.org/block-the-3-windows-of-shaytan/>

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

*"People's deeds are presented before Allah on Mondays and Thursdays, and then every slave (of Allah) is granted forgiveness (of minor sins) if he does not associate anything with Allah in worship. **But the person in whose heart there is rancour against his brother, will not be pardoned.** With regard to them, it is said twice: 'Hold these two until they are reconciled'." [Muslim]*

Three days lets the one who was in the wrong see his mistake

We often forget that in the three days that both parties have after the dispute, it gives them both a chance to see where they were wrong, realise their mistake, and admit it. We don't usually think about this time from the point of view of the one who was in the wrong. However the three days give them chance to review what they said or did, and mull it over internally and rectify it externally – by apologising or making amends.

They may realise they were hasty and should have taken more time, and they can learn from it, so they are better next time. The three days is therefore an important time for both sides.

Social media

It is easy for words to be misconstrued on social media. You cannot gauge how the message was intended. You may not realise it was meant humorously as you cannot see the body language, the facial expressions, or hear the tone of the voice that would have accompanied it face to face. Offence can be caused easily, and the best way to rectify it is to pick up the phone and clear the air, or at least send a voice memo, rather than get caught up in a bitter exchange.

Clear your mind every night

The best practice is to clear your mind every night by getting over the episodes which have upset you that day. Cleanse your heart every night, so it brings peace to your mind and your family. Do not let yourself rewind bad memories. Make du'a for Allah to clear your heart of rancour.

Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to supplicate, saying:

رَبِّ أَعْنِي وَلَا تُعِنِّ عَلَيَّ وَانصُرْنِي وَلَا تَنْصُرْ عَلَيَّ وَامْكُرْ لِي وَلَا تَمْكُرْ عَلَيَّ وَاهْدِنِي وَيَسِّرْ
الْهُدَى لِي وَانصُرْنِي عَلَى مَنْ بَغَى عَلَيَّ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي لَكَ شَكَارًا لَكَ ذَكَارًا لَكَ رَهَابًا لَكَ
مَطْوَعًا لَكَ مُحِبًّا إِلَيْكَ أَوْاهًا مُنِيبًا رَبِّ تَقَبَّلْ تَوْبَتِي وَاغْسِلْ حَوْبَتِي وَأَجِبْ دَعْوَتِي وَثَبِّتْ
حُجَّتِي وَسَدِّدْ لِسَانِي وَاهْدِ قَلْبِي وَاسْلُلْ سَخِيمَةَ صَدْرِي

*"O Lord, help me and do not help anyone against me, support me and do not support anyone against me, plan for me and do not plan against me. Guide me and make guidance easy for me. Support me against those who transgress against me. O Lord, make me grateful to You, remembering of You, fearful of You, obedient to You, humble to You, penitent and repenting. O Lord, accept my repentance, wash away my sin, answer my supplication, establish my proof, direct my tongue, guide my heart, and **remove the rancour from my chest.**"*

[Tirmidhi]

When you have been wronged and you forgive, your forgiveness is not complete until you delete all the files from the recycle bin so they cannot be retrieved later.

A joke must not be at the expense of someone or harm them

Words can be bullets on two occasions: when you are angry, and when you are joking. In Islam, you can laugh with others but not at them.

A joke must not belittle others. This is haram. You might break someone's heart or life by ridiculing them, which is bullying.

In Surat al-Hujurat Allah Almighty says:

ءَامِنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهَا
عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ
وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَلِيْمَان بَعْدَ الْفُسُوْقِ الْأَسْمِ بِئْسَ طِبَآلَٰلِقِب تَنَابِرُوا وَلَا أَنفُسَكُمْ تَلْمِزُوا وَلَا
الظَّالِمُونَ هُم

Believers, let not a group (of men) scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter (at whom they scoff) are better than they; nor let a group of women scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter are better than they. And do not taunt one another, nor revile one another by nicknames. It is an evil thing to gain notoriety for ungodliness after belief. Those who do not repent are indeed the wrong-doers. [49:11]

Sarcasm

Allah prohibited sarcasm (*sukhria*) as it knocks people's confidence and makes it hard for them to pick themselves up. *Psychology Today* gives insight into how sarcasm can be particularly hurtful and is used a weapon to put others down:

Sarcasm comes from the Greek *sarkasmos*, which means "the tearing of flesh." The intention behind sarcasm may be to be humorous or playful, but there is frequently an element of poorly disguised hostility or judgment. When we grow up in families in which sarcasm is frequently used, there can be an insensitivity to others' sensitivity to it. It can feel hurtful or hostile to the person on the receiving end of it. It frequently diminishes a feeling of trust and safety, provoking feelings of anxiety or defensiveness due to never knowing when the other shoe is going to drop.

Sarcasm is a thinly veiled attempt to disguise feelings of anger, fear, or hurt. It can be a means of diminishing feelings of vulnerability that may be experienced in the willingness to acknowledge the underlying feelings. When the deliverer of the sarcasm gets angry or defensive at the recipient of it for "taking things too personally" or being "too sensitive," they are trying to invalidate the other's feelings and avoid feeling guilty or responsible for causing them pain.²

Rule 8: Do good to everyone, whether they are worthy of it or not

The bottom line is that it is important to spread goodness. In Surat al-Hajj, we are given the equation for success: doing goodness leads to success.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ الْخَيْرَ رَبَّكُمْ وَأَفْعَلُوا وَأَعْبُدُوا وَأَسْجُدُوا أَرْكَعُوا ءَامِنُوا الَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهَا

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/stronger-the-broken-places/201907/sarcasm>

O you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good that you may succeed (22:77)

Therefore, as per the weak narration, you should do good to everyone, whether they deserve it or not. If you do good to the one who is worthy of it, he was worthy of it. If you do good to the one who was unworthy, then you are the worthy one.

Spreading goodness is part of our identity as an ummah of khayr, as Allah called us. Usually it is part of our psychology that we feel annoyed and disgusted when we are good to someone, but they treat us badly. At the very least we expect that they will show us respect or speak well of us. But in order for our actions to be accepted, they have to be done for Allah's sake, because He commanded us to be good. We should not expect ANYTHING in return. Remind yourself: you did it for Allah, to please Allah through them. You did not do it for them, to please them.

Are we good to parents for their sake? Or for Allah's sake?

When we do things to please our parents does that mean it is not for Allah's sake? It is, because Allah Almighty commanded us to be good to parents. Therefore we are good to them out of obedience to Him. He said:

أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا أَكْبَرَ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِيَّاهُ إِلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا رَبَّكَ وَقَضَىٰ
فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا
كَرِيمًا قَوْلًا لَهُمَا وَقُلْ

For your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents. If one or both of them reach old age in your care, never say to them 'even' 'ugh,' nor yell at them. Rather, address them respectfully. [17:23]

When you are good to them, Allah will ease your way.

The greatest priority is your parents. There are many children who have conflicts with their parents. How dare you have a conflict with your parents? You have no right to turn your back on them. Kiss their hands and ask for forgiveness. If your heart is not full of mercy towards your parents, you will not have *tawfiq* (the ability to achieve success) in your life.

In the famous but weak narration Jannah is beneath the feet of a mother, however in the authentic narration is that parents are the gate of Jannah.

*The father is the middle of the gates of Paradise, so keep to this gate or lose it.
(Tirmidhi)*

After the command to have tawheed comes the command to be good to you parents. You are lucky if your parents are still alive. Before it is too late, seek their pleasure do not let them pass away with anything in their heart against you.

Do not let people abuse your kindness

Sometimes you are kind, but you get taken for granted. You need to be careful that people are not taking you for a ride. There is a very fine line between being good to others, and being exploited or abused. You may not see it, but your friends can point it out. Don't let people abuse your kindness, because there are people who prey on those who show them kindness, and keep asking for and expecting more and more. If that is the case, you need to establish boundaries firmly but politely.

What if you are scammed?

Sometimes you might be asked for charity, for instance by someone at the train station who tells you a sob story about how they have lost their bag and needs money to get home. You may believe them and give them charity, and then discover that they are scam artists. Inshallah you will get the reward even if they lied to you. Don't regret your charity, but don't fall into this trap the next time.

Don't kick yourself for doing good to anyone: if your intention was pure Allah will reward it.

Rule 9. Treat a person according to their standard

Do not treat the fool as you would treat someone knowledgeable. Prophet Dawood (peace be on him) said:

How can it be that people love me and I submit to what is between me and you?

Allah Almighty revealed to him:

Treat the people of the world by the standards of the world and the people of the hereafter by the standards of the hereafter'. [Suyuti]

The core of this rule is diplomacy and wisdom. Though this is not a narration, it is a good concept.

When you retaliate harm with goodness, your enemies will become your intimate friends. Though it is easy to create an enemy, it is far better to have a friend. This does not mean you should be a hypocrite or bootlicker. Be a person of principles, but do not respond to bad with bad. Allah Almighty said:

وَلِيَّ عَدُوًّا كَأَنَّهُ بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ الَّذِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا بِأَلْتِي أَدْفَعُ السَّيِّئَةَ وَلَا الْحَسَنَةَ وَلَا تَسْتَوِي
حَمِيمٌ

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. [41:34]

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) commented on the ayah, 'and they counter bad with good' means that Allah commands the believers to be patient when they feel angry, to be forbearing when confronted with ignorance, and to forgive when they are mistreated. If they do this, Allah will save them from Shaytan and subdue their enemies to them until they become like close friends.

Use peace, wisdom and goodness to protect yourself from harm. It is easy to have a big mouth, but that is not wise. You can berate someone who is evil and nasty, but thought you are right it will get you nowhere, and could even land you in trouble. Do not flatter them either. Both responses are wrong.

A man once came the Prophet (peace be on him) and though he was known to be evil, the Prophet (peace be on him) greeted him and spoke to him politely. This left Aisha puzzled. She had expected that he should be treated with rudeness. However the Prophet (peace be on him) explained to her that this would have created more problems than being polite to him. He went on to say:

*The worst people are the ones you treat with goodness to avoid their evil.
[Buhkari and Muslim]*

Therefore, you need to minimise their evil by treating them tactfully without compromising your principles. We have seen many celebrities fall into this trap.

When you lose your balance, you lose direction.

When you lose your physical balance, you lose your direction literally. When you lose your taqwa-balance, you can fall into the trap of the Shaytan; for instance, some scholars get into positions where they end up rubber-stamping government policies, which they shouldn't. When you ask them why they do this, they say it is better than letting someone else do it who may do worse.

I do not doubt their intention, but it is a slippery slope. I ask Allah to keep us on the straight path, because you may think you are doing goodness, but you might be moving away from the right path.

Ultimately, people of dunya are not on the same wavelength as you, so while you may discuss what is in your heart with people of akhirah, people of dunya will not understand and may use it against you. They are on a different page.

Rule 10. Honour those who deserve honour

As narrated by Ibn Majah, the Prophet (peace be on him) showed respect and honour to people of high status. Increase the honour you give to people of high status, even if it is a person of worldly status. The Prophet (peace be on him) would spread out his cloak to honour leaders and people of high worldly rank, and let them sit on it. He would receive delegations in his mosque and honour them because of their worldly status, not necessarily their piety. For instance, he did this for Jarir bin Abdillah al Bajari, who accepted Islam the year the Prophet (peace be on him) died.

The Prophet (peace be on him) also honoured the friends of his late wife, Khadija, by taking off his upper garment for them to sit on it. This was his *akhlaq* (beautiful behaviour).

When he used to write letters to world leaders, he used their worldly titles. He never stripped them of the honourable titles they had. Honouring them is from wisdom. Be kind and wise towards others.

Rule 11: Cover other people's mistakes and sins

One of the rights of a Muslim is for you to cover their faults. Do not publicise or broadcast people's mistakes on social media. While there is still a screen over their faults, they have a chance to rectify their faults and repent. However once they are exposed and humiliated, they have no way to preserve their dignity. They will be labelled and they will find it hard to shake off that label, so their sin will become more permanent.

Ghazali has quoted some good and some weak hadith in this section. The hadith which is weak is that whoever covers faults of others will be entered to Jannah. The concept of covering the fault is good, but the reward is not authentic.

The authentic hadith is that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

O all those who have believed with their tongue without imaan entering their heart! Do not backbite Muslims and do not follow after their faults. Truly whoever follows the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will follow after his faults. Whoever has Allah follow after his faults, He will expose him even if he is in the recesses of his home. [Ibn Hibban]

This means that those who expose others will be exposed themselves. In Surat an-Nur, which deals with the fabrication of allegations against Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), Allah Almighty gave guidance on how to deal with gossip and sins in the community, and how to behave.

وَاللَّهُ وَالْآخِرَةَ الدُّنْيَا ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الَّذِينَ فِي الْفَحِشَةِ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الَّذِينَ إِنَّ
يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread (or publicised) among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know. [24:19]

This is a clear instruction not to expose the mistakes of others.

يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ فَإِنَّهُ الشَّيْطَانُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوتَ الشَّيْطَانِ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتِ الَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهَا
وَالْمُنْكَرِ

يُرَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنَّ مَا زَكَّى مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing. And if not for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have been pure, ever, but Allah purifies whom He wills, and Allah is Hearing and Knowing. [24:21]

Here, Allah Almighty says that if you expose others, you are following the footsteps of Shaytan, because he advocates this, and there will be a severe punishment for you if you do this.

Conversely, if you screen others, Allah will screen you. If you shield the mistakes of others, Allah will conceal your mistakes in both dunya and akhirah, because whatever you do will rebound on you.

The Prophet (peace be on him) wanted us to be merciful towards others, rather than push them towards more sins and mistakes. We are all in need of being shielded, so we should follow the recommendations of the sunnah.

I have personally witnessed this. I knew of someone who was very vocal in attacking someone else for their mistakes, but was himself exposed a year later. When it happened to him, he was upset and said, 'You should listen to my side of the story!' But by then it was all over social media. He had to taste his own medicine.

Our community is not angelic. It is a human community, liable to sin and make mistakes. Where it is not harming anyone else, sins should be veiled. If someone is proud of their sins, and does not cover them, this does not give you the licence to spread them further.

[When sins must be brought to light](#)

When a sin is a matter of public concern, such as interfering with someone's position or office, it should be revealed. There are different scenarios and guidance. For instance, if someone in public office is stealing money, it should not be hushed up. This is public money.

[Help someone privately to sinning rather than expose them publicly](#)

If a friend or colleague is doing something wrong, it may be possible to help them stop this by taking them aside and having a private word, rather than taking it to the management, as long as its not illegal. You might be more effective in correcting their mistake without exposing them, depending on your relationship. It is important to make people accountable for their mistakes.

Rule 12: Stay away from places of disrepute

Stay away from places of accusation, for Imam Ajluni said:

'Whoever places himself in a place of accusation should not blame anyone who thinks badly of him.' (Kashaf al-Khafa)

If you see someone leaving a pub or nightclub, our assumption will be that they were engaged in haram. They may not have been, and may have had a reason to be there, but the mind will automatically jump to the assumption that they were doing something wrong. Don't put yourself in a situation that allows others to automatically connect you to sin.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said in many narrations that whoever avoids doubtful matters is protecting his reputation and his religion. Protect your honour and reputation as Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said 'Avoid what the mind will disapprove, even if you have an explanation for it.' Otherwise you are making yourself a target for gossips and backbiters.

Spreading gossip while pretending not to

Some people say, 'I'm not accusing so and so, but I saw him coming out of THAT place.' This is thinly veiled accusation. Though you are saying you are not accusing them, you are doing exactly that by casting doubt on them and spreading the headlines.

The Prophet (peace be on him) was once out during the night with his wife, and passed some companions. They exchanged salams, and the Prophet (peace be on him) clarified immediately that the women he was with was his wife, Safiya. The companions were embarrassed that the Messenger (peace be on him) felt the need to clarify whom he was with, but he explained that it is Shaytan who incites us to think the worst of people and situations, and that he is always present, whispering evil thoughts, like the very blood in our veins.

Both of them said, "Subhan Allah, (How dare we think of any evil) O Allah's Messenger (peace be on him)!" And they felt it. The Prophet said (to them), "Satan reaches everywhere in the human body as blood reaches in it, (everywhere in one's body). I was afraid lest Satan might insert an evil thought in your minds."
[Bukhari]

Preaching in unlikely places

The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, is a very talented person though he has been called many names. Nevertheless, he was undoubtedly a great personality, and he started his dawah in an unusual way, by going to coffee shops and places of entertainment, rather than preaching in mosques. It was a brave, bold and risky idea, but it was successful, and Allah facilitated the goodness through him. This is an exceptional way to spread goodness, by approaching people in unlikely places. At times, people from the Tablighi Jamaat will also go to coffee shops and invite people to Islam, or even places that are not very decent, and will bring back drunk people. This is not the norm. By and large, it is better to stay away from places where your reputation will be tarnished.

Rule 13. Hurry to fulfil the needs of others

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

Intercede with me for one another and be rewarded; for indeed I want to do a thing but put I off so that you may intercede with me and be rewarded. [Abu Dawood]

Shafa means to intercede for someone. *Shafa* is not just limited to intercession on the Day of Judgement, but also means to help and support others, and to use your influence and connections to help others.

يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ فَإِنَّهُ الشَّيْطَانُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهَا
وَالْمُنْكَرِ

يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ أَلِيمٌ وَلَكِنْ مَا زَكَّى مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty. [5:2]

Allah Almighty is commanding us to help one another to achieve goodness. The Prophet (peace be on him) said we should intercede for one another and be rewarded. Therefore, if you can help someone, then do it, or if you know someone who can help them, put them in touch with the person who can help.

Help others and connect them to those who can help

Islam does not promote an attitude that other people's problems are theirs, and you do not need to do anything. Whatever you can do in your capacity to help others, you should do.

For instance, if there is a student who is bright and keen, and wants to study at university but does not have the means, and you know someone who is willing to pay his tuition fees, ask them. You will be rewarded because you helped him. Or if you are aware of a fundraising project, and you know someone who can donate to it, pass on the message to them.

Shafa is like being an ambassador of goodness. Even if you didn't manage to fulfil the need of your brother, at least try. You might intercede and then discover it is beyond your ability, but at least you tried. Keep the flame of helping others alive in you. The moment this flame is extinguished, you adopt 'I don't care' attitude.

You should feel that everything in the Muslim community is your concern. Instead of not caring, and being selfish, be the one who offers support. Islam does not support 'Me, myself and I.' The community is one unit, so you give people a hand. When you need help you will find it, because you did goodness and Allah eases the way for you.

To stand with your brother to fulfill his need for a moment is better than seclusion in the mosque. [Tabarani and Ibn 'Asakir]

The reason for this is that when you support a person, the goodness ripples outwards and has a knock-on effect on society. It is public benefit over private benefit. When you support someone, it is not just on person who benefits, but their wife, relatives, community, etc. Whereas when you do *etikaf*, the beneficiary is just you.

Do not give false hope

When you offer your help, tell them that you will try your best, but you cannot guarantee that you will be able to sort out something. Don't give false hope to people. Say, 'I can't promise, but I will do my best,' and then genuinely do your best.

Do not intercede for haram

Remember that you cannot intercede for something that is not halal. You may not intercede for a cause or case that is not shariah compliant.

At the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there was woman from the Bani Makhzoom tribe, which had a high status, who stole something. She used to borrow things but not return them. On one occasion she took something very valuable. The limits of shariah had been broken so the punishment was to chop off her hand. Her tribe did not want this punishment, so they decided to approach the Prophet (peace be on him) through the people closest to him, which included Zayd his beloved adopted son, who lived with them by the Prophet (peace be on him). Zayd had been Khadija's slave (may Allah be pleased with them), before she gave him to the Prophet (peace be on him) who loved him so much he adopted him and gave him his name, until Allah revealed that it was not permissible to do this.

The Makhzoom tribe came to Zayd and asked him to intercede for the woman. Zayd went to plead her case to the Prophet (peace be on him) but he was so angry that Zayd was in effect interceding against the *hudud* (punishments) of Allah. He commented that if his daughter Fatima were to steal, he would chop off her hand.

It was narrated from Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) that:

A woman from Bani Makhzoom stole (something), and she was brought to the Prophet. She sought the protection of Umm Salamah, but the Prophet said: "If Fatimah bint Muhammad were to steal, I would cut off her hand." And he ordered that her hand be cut off. [Nasai]

We see from this that you cannot intercede for the haram. If you do, you will be sinful. As an example, if someone wants help to buy a pub, you cannot help him. It is obvious haram. It is not a case of helping him in anything because he is your friend. It can only be in what is permissible and legal as per the shariah.

Rule 14. Initiate the salam

There are many narrations on the etiquettes of the salam, such as greeting each other with a smile, and how to greet a group, or a passer-by, how it should be done between youngsters and elders, and who should say it first and how they should say it.

One of the first speeches given by the Prophet (peace be on him) when he arrived in Madinah urged people to say the salam and create good relationships.

'Abdullah bin Salam said:

"When the Prophet (peace be on him) came to Al-Madinah, the people rushed to meet him, and it was said: 'The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come! The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come! The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has come!' Three times. I came with the people to see him, and when I saw his face clearly, I knew that his face was not the face of a liar. The first thing I heard him say was when he said: 'O people! Spread (the greeting of) Salam, feed others, uphold the ties of kinship, and pray during the night when people are sleeping, and you will enter Paradise with Salam.'" [Ibn Majah]

It is the right of every Muslim to be greeted, and if someone greets you it is incumbent to reply. To say salam is sunnah, to reply is wajib (obligatory). Moreover, the tone of your voice is important. You

should not, for instance, raise your voice when you arrive if people are asleep there, so they are not disturbed. You cannot say salam to someone who is in the toilet. Therefore, we apply the rule but with the right etiquettes. Otherwise you might apply the rule without the etiquette and create more harm than good.

When we used to attend the circle of our shaykh, it was very annoying when we were all focused on his lesson, and someone arrived late but instead of sitting down quietly, he said it so loudly, he disturbed everyone's concentration and disrupted the flow of the shaykh. This is not the correct understanding of initiating the salam.

Shaking hands

The Prophet (peace be on him) said it is the right of a Muslim to be greeted. Therefore we greet everyone – Muslims, non-Muslims, men and women. Usually if you do not greet people in the way that is the norm for that culture, it will be deemed rude and insulting. If you are going anywhere new, find out what their norm is.

Shaking hands is a common form of greeting in most cultures. Some cultures go beyond this, to a kiss on the cheeks or hugs, or nose rubbing. If it does not overstep boundaries, you can use any form of greeting, such as hugs between women and women, or between men and men. We do not have hugs between non-mahram men and women.

The default position is that we do not shake hands with the opposite sex if they are a non-mahrams. There is a hadith that it is better to hold a red-hot coal than shake hands. Though some scholars support the authenticity of the narrations, when you go through these narrations, they are weak, not strong or *sahih*. In order to say something is *haram* you need a strong narration. At least, you might say it is doubtful and that it is better to avoid it, than to forbid it.

This does not mean that men and women should be shaking hands as it is not in line with Islamic etiquette for men and women to touch. Allah Almighty said:

So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can. (64:16)

Where it causes more harm to avoid shaking hands

Where it is unavoidable and will create more problems if you do not shake hands, you can shake hands, but make the handshake brief. Living in the west it can be awkward or cause offence if you refuse to shake hands. There are different customs and habits in different communities. Consider the consequence of rejecting someone's outstretched hand – they will feel insulted. Usually there isn't enough time to react once a hand has been offered to you.

In workplaces, university, etc. not everyone is able to articulate why they do not wish to shake hands. If you shake hands with someone of the opposite sex, then do *istighfar* and ask Allah to protect you.

The bottom line is that it is preferable not to shake hands, but you can if you have to. Don't do it, if you feel there the gesture will create harm. Use your common sense and judgment.

In general Muslims avoid any physical contact between sexes. Unless it is unavoidable, such as medically when a doctor or specialist of the same sex is not available or it is a medical emergency or it is a localised area such as dentist, as he/she only touches your face, you should not make contact with others of the opposite sex. Therefore it is wrong to have a massage or haircut by someone of the opposite sex.

Rule 15: Defend and support your brother or sister in their absence

If someone backbites another person in your presence, or steals their property and you witness it, and can do something about it, but you do not defend them, because you feel it's nothing to do with you and is not your business – this is not the right attitude. Having an 'I do not care' attitude is not from Islam. We have to care about what is happening around us and about fellow Muslims, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The correct Islamic attitude is 'I do care'.

The Prophet (peace be on him) wanted us to be people of action and principles, who spread their principles and live and die by them.

If someone's reputation is attacked in your presence, you should defend it, otherwise Allah will make you taste the same treatment. When you most need your reputation to be protected, it will not be defended in your absence. If some people attack your friend or relative or colleague and you let them, then expect the same. So be careful.

There are some people whom you know are loyal to you in your presence and in your absence. Others are very good to your face, but behind your back, you are not sure whether they will defend you, or even attack you. These are among the last principles that the Prophet (peace be on him) mentioned in his Farewell Speech during Hajj in Mina and Muzdalifa.

'Abdullah bin 'Amr said:

"I saw the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) circumambulating the Ka'bah and saying: 'How good you are and how good your fragrance; how great you are and how great your sanctity. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, the sanctity of the believer is greater before Allah than your sanctity, his blood and his wealth, and to think anything but good of him.'"

[Ibn Majah]

Rule 16: Handling malicious people with diplomacy (Mudaraat)

We need to use tact and diplomacy when dealing with people, especially when we are with malicious people, for our safety. Not everyone can master the art of diplomacy, for it is an art. There is a fine line between being tactful and hypocritical, and though it is easy to slip from one to the other, they are not the same thing.

When the Prophet (peace be on him) was meeting with a vile person, the Prophet (peace be on him) treated him courteously and Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was puzzled and asked him why he had done that. The Prophet (peace be on him) replied:

'O Aisha, truly the person in the worse position with Allah on the Day of Resurrection, is he who people abandon in order to get away from his vileness.

[Bukhari]

There are some people who are disagreeable, they are troublemakers, they are loud, aggressive, provocative, and generally rude. It is not wise to tackle such people head on. They may be in your family or place of work or in your community. Do not want to make enemies of them as they can be very destructive and influential. This could bring a great deal of harm to you. A confrontational approach with them is likely to backfire, especially as they do take criticism well.

Without being a hypocrite, have a civil relationship with them, rather than an antagonistic one, so that you minimise their harm. Contain their evil rather than fuel it.

Do not deliver the truth with a sledgehammer

Do not deliver the truth with a blunt instrument, simply because it is the truth. Some people specialise in dumping the truth on you, without any regard for your feelings. They do not consider whether the time is right, or you are in the right frame of mind to receive it. Stating the truth in a harsh way is not the prophetic way. There is a way to say it, which will not only land more softly but be more effective than delivering it with the subtlety of a sledgehammer.

Speaking the truth is not a licence to trample on others' feelings or ignoring the right etiquettes of delivering it.

Rule 17: Avoid the rich and spend time with the poor

Ghazali quoted a weak narration,

“Beware of sitting with the dead!” It was said, ‘And who are they?’ He said ‘The rich’.” [Tirmidhi]

This does not mean that one cannot have friends who are wealthy, or spend time with them. The Prophet (peace be on him) had rich companions, such as Abu Bakr, and in particular Abdur-Rahman bin Auf, Uthman (may Allah be pleased with them), and they backed him. However, the Prophet (peace be on him) made the dua:

Make me live as a poor person and die as poor person and raise me up in the company of the poor. [Tirmidhi]

This is another weak narration, but the concept is expressed in the Quran, in Surat al-Kahf:

وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَالْعَاشِي يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدْوَةِ الَّذِينَ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ وَأَصْبِرِ
الدُّنْيَا الْحَيَاةِ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ

فُرْطًا أَمْرُهُ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ عَنِ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعِ قَلْبُهُ أَغْفَلْنَا مَنْ تُطِيعُ وَلَا

And patiently stick with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure. Do not let your eyes look beyond them, desiring the luxuries of this worldly life. And do not obey those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follow [only] their desires and whose state is [total] loss. [18:28]

The ayah is referring to the poor people and those from the lower classes, such as those who lived in the back section of the mosque, known as as-Suffah, as they had nowhere else to live. They did not belong to the upper echelons of society. The concept here is that Islam is not restricted to a particular class, or race, rather it is for everyone. There is no class system in Islam. What makes you special is your intention and your actions.

In Makkah, when Islam was new, and it was the beginning of dawah, the elite classes could not bear the idea of having to attend a meeting in which their servants and slaves were present or treated as their equals. They asked the Prophet (peace be on him) to kick them out, so that they could deign to be Muslim. The Prophet (peace be on him) wanted to appeal to them, but Allah Almighty pointed out to him that they were arrogant and arrogant people will not believe.

اللَّهُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ النَّاسِ بِأَيِّهَا
عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ۗ اللَّهُ أَنْفَعُكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ

*Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has Taqwa
[i.e. one of the Muttaqun (pious). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. [49:13]*

There is nothing wrong with having wealth. Wealthy people can be attached to Allah, but the warning here is that being attached to dunya, especially when Islam was starting out, would take it in the wrong direction.

Rule 18: Have good company

Distance yourself from people of *ghaflah* (heedlessness). Their *ghaflah* will be reflected by you, and this will impact your level of imaan.. The heart which is occupied with dunya casts shadows around it. It will blot out the light of your heart. Abu Huraira said,

“The believer is a mirror to his brother. If he sees something wrong in him, he should correct it.” [Adab al Mufrad]

The weaker the believer, the more they reflect the darkness of dusky hearts around them. They are not evil themselves, but because of their company, they end up going in the wrong direction.

Abu Musa reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Verily, the parable of good company and a bad company is only that of a seller of musk and a blacksmith. The seller of musk will give you some perfume, you will buy some, or you will notice a good smell. As for the blacksmith, he will burn your clothes or you will notice a bad smell.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

This hadith is encouragement to have good companions, because in their company you will smell fragrant, just as you get squirted liberally by perfume samples when pass through duty free. And you often end up buying some.

The bad companion is like the blacksmith, who leaves you with a bad smell, covered in soot and wreaking of smoke, which penetrates your clothes, your body and your hair. And, worse, who causes you to get burnt from the sparks which fly off his forge.

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“A man is upon the religion of his best friend, so let one of you look at whom he befriends.” [Tirmidhi]

Be with the right crowd and you will excel, otherwise you will be with the losers.

In a gang, the one who is not evil will end up doing crimes he never dreamed he would do, just to prove himself and so he is not called ‘chicken’. However, this is a trap of Shaytan. We do not show off good or bad deeds in Islam. We do not boast about our goodness, or tell everyone we prayed a hundred rakahs during the night.

The solution is to remember Allah. If Allah is pleased with you, He will elevate your status in dunya and akhirah. If Allah is displeased with you, it does not matter if people say you are a king, because you will be called the devil in the heavens.

Ibn Atta illah al Iskandari said:

Do not befriend a person whose state and speech does not bring you closer towards Allah.

This is very important advice. Good friends inspire you to do better and become better.

Rule 19: Avoid people of heedlessness

Staying with people of *ghaflah* diminishes your imaan and deen. Rather than walking in the sunlight, you will be lurking in their dark shadows. It will affect you mentally, physically and spiritually.

Whenever you are with them, it is as if they take a thread from your clothes or a strand of hair from your head. After a little while, you will find yourself bald and naked. Losing your faith is even worse than losing your clothes and hair. Therefore, do not risk your deen by being in bad company. Do not think you are strong enough to withstand their company.

Rule 20: Uphold the six rights of Muslims

Visit the sick, attend funerals, pray for others, bless the one who sneezes, return the salam, be fair, give sincere advice when asked

Ali ibn Abi Talib reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“A Muslim has six rights over another Muslim in good conduct: to greet him with peace when he meets him, to respond to his invitation, to respond to his sneeze, to visit him when he is sick, to follow his funeral prayer when he dies, and to love for him what he loves for himself.” [Tirmidhi]

As discussed in Rule 14, it is the right of every Muslim to be greeted with salam, and it is wajib to reply to their salam.³ It is also the right of every Muslim to have their invitations accepted⁴ and to be responded to when they sneeze.⁵

It is also a right to be visited when they are sick. If this is not possible, you can contact them by phone or Facetime. Do not underestimate the power of calling up someone who is ill, or sending a message or a gift. It spreads goodness and shows them you care for them, and they can depend on you.⁶ When you yourself are ill, inshallah you will realise the value of this, when there are people to support you. Make du'a for the sick and their du'a for you will be accepted inshallah.

You can make du'a for them, reassure them that you are there for them and that you will support them. This can be in the form of moral support; social and spiritual support has been proven from scientific point of view to aid recovery. Whereas those who are left alone with no one support take longer to be cured.

³<https://www.utrujj.org/how-to-deal-with-people-hurry-to-help-others-and-initiate-the-salam-ghazalis-rules-14-15/>

⁴ <https://www.utrujj.org/what-is-the-ruling-on-accepting-invitations/>

⁵ <https://www.utrujj.org/what-should-you-say-if-someone-sneezes/>

⁶<https://www.utrujj.org/how-does-allah-reward-the-sick-and-why-should-we-make-the-most-of-our-health/>

Muslims should be an ummah which is supportive of each other, not just physically or financially, but also emotionally. We should create a network of support, and to this end the Prophet (peace be on him) showed us how to give each other moral support, socialise and be good to each other,

When someone dies, it is their right that their janaza will be attended.⁷ The reward is huge.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

“Whoever follows the funeral of Muslim, in faith and seeking reward, and he remains with it until the prayer is offered and the burial ceremony is finished, then he will return with two great rewards. Each reward is like the size of mount Uhud. Whoever offers the funeral prayer and returns before the burial, then he will return with one great reward.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

Of course, we have to follow the janaza with etiquettes, and there must not be any wailing or screaming.

Moreover, we can make du’a for those we love in their absence. We call this *du’a fi dhari ghayb*. They do not know about this, but Allah will accept this inshallah. On some occasions you can make du’a for them in front of them, though you should not do things to please people.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah.” [Abu Dawood]

We have to show appreciation to others. Being appreciated should not be our motivator to act on anything, rather acting for Allah’s sake.

Be fair and just at all times, even if it involves going against your self-interests. If you do something wrong, then do not brush it under the carpet, but admit it is wrong.

Give good advice to those who are asking. Do not give the wrong advice if you don’t know the answer, say you don’t know.

Ghazali explored the first and third circle, now we are looking at the second circle – your relationship with your relatives, neighbours and servants: *jiwar* and *jar* (neighbours) and then *qaraba* (relatives), *milk* (servants, employees).

Companionship with those close to you

Love thy neighbour

Ghazali quotes a hadith that the first disputants on the Day of Judgement will be neighbours with a dispute. However, a stronger hadith is that the Prophet (peace be on him) was sent so many instructions to be good to neighbours, that he felt it would not be long before he would be commanded to leave a portion of his inheritance to his neighbours as well. He (peace be on him) said:

Jibril kept recommending me to treat my neighbour well until I thought that he would tell me to make him one of my heirs. [Bukhari]

After describing the rights of neighbours, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have stated:

⁷ <https://www.utruji.org/how-to-perform-salatul-janaza/>

“Listen to what I tell you. Only a few people who are blessed by God’s Mercy fulfil the rights of neighbours. God enjoined on me the rights of the neighbour to the extent that I thought He would appoint him as an heir.” [Mustadrak al-Wasa’il]

There are plenty of authentic narrations on this topic, as the concept of neighbours is very deep in the sunnah and unsurprisingly supported by a multitude of hadith. Even the Quran mentions the neighbour in Surah an-Nisa:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ
ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن
كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents be excellent, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side, the traveller, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.

[4:36]

Allah Almighty commands us to be good to neighbours twice, in the same ayah mentioning those who are close as well as those who are far. The Prophet (peace be on him) also confirmed this.

Why must we be good to neighbours?

It is important to have good relations with your neighbours, because you live in close proximity to them. Even in rural areas, where your closest neighbours live 200m away, they are still your neighbours. If you have a nice neighbour he can make your day, and if you have a bad neighbour, he can make your life hell.

I had a friend who moved out of his dream home which he painstakingly refurbished because of his nasty neighbours. They can make life so miserable that they can drive you away. A good neighbour is a grace from Allah Almighty.

Finding alternate ways to resolve your dispute

It is narrated in Tirmidhi, that at the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there was a man whose neighbour made his life so difficult he came to ask for advice. The Prophet (peace be on him) advised him to place all his furniture in the street, and if anyone was to ask why he had done this, he should say his neighbour had caused it. The embarrassment made his neighbour leave him in peace. It is akin to putting the issue on social media.

If the neighbour is not listening, then you have the right to escalate the conflict. Though you try to resolve it with them first, if you have tried every way you can, and they continue being a nuisance or harming you, you can resort to putting it on social media. Think about the consequences and details. This is what the Prophet (peace be on him) did. He understood the circumstances and details of the case, and brought justice in that situation by providing a solution that saved them going to court. Although taking the matter to him was like going to court, he dealt with it in an innovative way.

To harm your neighbour is to harm yourself

To harm your neighbour is to bring harm upon yourself. Be careful, as Allah Almighty will send you a neighbour who will harm you. To harm your neighbour shows bad character and a lack of imaan in the akhirah, because when you harm someone, he can make dua against you. Even if he is non-Muslim,

his dua will be accepted against you if you are oppressing them. Allah Almighty commanded us to be good and this is even more necessary when it concerns your neighbour.

When you are a good neighbour, Allah sends you good neighbours. Imam Ghazali quotes that if you harm your neighbour's dog, you have harmed your neighbour. (In general you are not permitted to keep dogs as pets, unless there is a need for it, like a blind man who needs a guide dog, or a farmer who needs a sheep dog. This dog should not sleep in the house, but be kept outdoors.) Therefore, whether it is your neighbour's pet, or property or belongings, you must not cause harm to them.

The penalty for harming a neighbour

Indeed, the penalty for harming a neighbour is severe. Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

A man asked, "O Messenger of Allah! There is a woman who prays, gives charity and fasts a great deal, but she harms her neighbours with her speech (by insulting them)" He said: "She will go to Hell". The man said: "O messenger of Allah! There is (another) woman who is well-known for how little she fasts and prays, but she gives charity from the dried yoghurt she makes and she does not harm her neighbours". He said: "She will go to paradise" [Ahmad and Ibn Hibban]

Some scholars said that this lady was in Hellfire, because she was a disbeliever and bad to her neighbour, others said she was a believer but she would not enter Jannah until she settled her account, and this include entering Hellfire before entering Jannah.

Support your neighbour

In Shuab al-Imaan, Imam al-Ghazali mentioned that when he was asked what the rights of the neighbour are, the Prophet (peace be on him) answered:

"The least of a neighbour's rights on him is that if he asks him for a loan, he should grant it to him. If he asks for help, he should help him. If he wants to borrow something from him, he should lend it to him. If he needs him to donate something to him, he should do so. If he invites him, he should accept his invitation. If he gets sick, he should go and visit him. If he passes away, he should attend his funeral procession." [Mustadrak al-Wasa'il]

If your neighbour's request is genuine and you can help him, you should. Of course you should do this for people in general, but it is more emphasised for your neighbour. Share in their happiness and special occasions, and when they are afflicted, go to their aid and support them.

Noisy neighbours

One night, my neighbours had a party which was particularly noisy and continued past 1am. From 11pm until 7am, there are limits to how much noise you can make. If your neighbours disregard this, try to stop them in a nice way. Otherwise you can report them to the council for statutory nuisance and they can be fined £5000⁸. You can create a big scene, but it is better if you can resolve the problem calmly.

Privacy

Respect your neighbours' privacy. Do not build in such a way that your extension overlooks your neighbour's house and invades his privacy. Do not build a wall that prevents the sunlight entering his house, or the wind coming to his garden, as this is his right. Sometimes you may overhear our

⁸ <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/noise-nuisance-and-neighbours>

neighbours in the garden, but you have to protect their secrets. Do not reveal them, as there is sanctity for their secrets.

Sharing with your neighbour

Al-Ghazali goes on to say that if you buy fruit, you should share it with your neighbour, and if you do not have enough to share it, do not make him jealous by letting him see it. This could also apply for instance if you have a barbecue: the smell will waft into his garden, so send over some food.

At Eid, we divide the meat from sacrifice into three portions, and one of these portions can be distributed to your neighbour. If you give, your neighbour will usually reciprocate. This is how the whole street becomes good to each other.

In my area, some neighbouring streets hold an annual street party with the council's permission and nearly 70 houses take part. It is a nice idea. They put up decorations and have a barbecue. This is a good way for people to get to know each other.

Being good to neighbours encourages goodness between people by focusing on those who live closest to us. Their behaviour affects your daily life. A good neighbour gives you peace of mind. A bad neighbour makes you anxious and puts you under stress.

No one fulfils the right of his neighbour except someone to whom Allah has shown mercy. [Bayhaqi]

How can someone who prays and fasts be a bad neighbour?

The thing that admits people to Jannah the most is taqwa and then good character. That's it. You need to focus on two things. Under taqwa there are a great many details, but the first level is to fulfil your obligations and refrain from what has been prohibited. The second level is to avoid doubtful matters and perform the nawafil. Dr Nuruddin Itr commented that the Prophet (peace be on him) divided rights into two: the rights of Allah Almighty, and the rights of people, which are met through good character. If you fulfil Allah's rights and people's rights, you will enter Jannah.

Some people focus exclusively on Allah's rights by praying and praying, but they then neglect people's rights. This is a contradiction because the one who prays should exemplify good character. However, their behaviour shows that they do not realise the importance of people's rights. They have some shortcomings which they need to address.

This is why Allah Almighty forgives all sins except debt. When you return from Hajj, your record of sins is wiped clean except for unpaid debts.

It is so clear and so easy to understand.

Relatives: Blood ties are special⁹

'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أَنَا الرَّحْمَنُ، وَأَنَا خَلَقْتُ الرَّحِمَ، وَاسْتَنْقَضْتُ لَهَا مِنْ اسْمِي، فَمَنْ وَصَلَهَا
وَصَلَتْهُ، وَمَنْ قَطَعَهَا بَنَتْهُ

"Allah, the Almighty and Exalted, said, 'I am the Merciful (ar-Rahman). I have created ties of kinship and derives a name for it from My Name. If anyone

⁹ <https://www.utruji.org/be-good-to-your-relatives/>

maintains ties of kinship, I maintain connection with him, and I shall cut off anyone who cuts them off." [Adab al Mufrad]

In general we have to be good to our families, and prioritise and focus on our close family before extended family.

What about difficult relatives? We all have these, but they are your *rahim* (connected to you by blood) so you have to behave well towards them. We are given huge encouragement to be good to relatives as it carries enormous reward.

The reward for being good to family

The incentives for being good to family are huge. One of the rewards for maintaining good relations (*silaturahmi*) with relatives is that you are granted more rizq and a longer life span.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him):

He who wishes to have his earnings grow and his term of life or his lifespan is prolonged; he should keep ties with his kin. [Bukhari]

How is it that your destiny, written at birth, can change by this? Abdullah bin Mus'ud narrated that Allah's Messenger (peace be on him) said:

*"(The matter of the Creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his (i.e. the new creature's) deeds, his **livelihood**, his **(date of) death**, and whether he will be blessed or wretched (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into him. So, a man amongst you may do (good deeds till there is only a cubit between him and Paradise and then what has been written for him decides his behaviour and he starts doing (evil) deeds characteristic of the people of the (Hell) Fire. And similarly a man amongst you may do (evil) deeds till there is only a cubit between him and the (Hell) Fire, and then what has been written for him decides his behaviour, and he starts doing deeds characteristic of the people of Paradise."*
[Bukhari]

The answer is that your destiny is written at birth and Allah has recorded this, but what is written is the Preserved table (*lah al-mahfouz*). This does not change. However in the Book of the Angels, which is given to them periodically, it can be changed. Therefore if someone had a lifespan of 60 but then began to maintain better relations with his family, Allah will command the angels to extend his life span.

The punishment for not being good to your family

Tabarani, Bukhari and Muslim have mentioned that the fragrance of Jannah can be smelt 500 years before you reach it, but the one who disconnects from his relatives and is bad to his parents will not smell this fragrance. In Bukhari it says they will not be admitted to Jannah if they do not maintain good relationships with their family.

The reason for this is because the family is the building block of society. This is why Allah commanded us to be good and this goodness begins at home:

وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ تَأْمُرُونَ لِلنَّاسِ أُخْرَجَتْ أُمَّةٌ خَيْرَ كُنْتُمْ
الْفَالِسُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْكِتَابِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ

“You are the best nation raised up for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and you believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them [though] among them are believers, but most of them are disobedient.” [3:110]

The ripple effect of goodness starts with the nuclear family and then spreads outwards to relatives, even those relatives who are not good to you.

Family feuds

Unfortunately, we tend to inherit broken relationships from our parents. For instance, if your father has issues with your uncle, you will be less likely to talk to him and his family. Thus, generations become disconnected, because of sometimes quite petty reasons or the whisperings of Shaytan, who exacerbates hurt and makes you think ill of others and situations.

The bottom line is that you are always being reminded to be good. You have to be good to your parents, your family, your relatives, wife and children, cousins and uncles, etc., even if they are not good to you.

This is where the challenge is. Jannah is not free of charge. Do not be vulnerable to abuse. Do the best to maintain a good relationship with your family, without allowing yourself to be placed under hardship or opening yourself to abuse.

Be good to parents

Among the narrations Imam al-Ghazali talks about the importance of being good to parents. Abdullah ibn Amr reported:

A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) asking permission to wage jihad. The Prophet said, “Are your parents alive?” The man said yes. The Prophet said, “Then strive in the service of them both.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that a person came to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and said:

“Who among the people is most deserving of a fine treatment from my hand?” He said: “Your mother.” He again said: “Then who (is the next one)?” He said: “Again it is your mother (who deserves the best treatment from you)”. He said: “Then who (is the next one)?” He (the Holy Prophet) said: “Again, it is your mother.” He (again) said: “Then who?” Thereupon he said: “Then it is your father.” [In the hadith transmitted on the authority of Qutalba, there is no mention of the word “the people”.] [Muslim]

The well-known narration that paradise lies under the feet of mothers is a weak narration, but its meaning is fine as it is in line with *Wa bil walidayni ihsan*.

أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا إِكْبَرًا إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ وَفَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
فَلا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفًّا

وَأَلا تَنْهَرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age (while) with you, say not to them (so much as), “uff”, and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.” [17:23]

Be good to your wife

We have been taught that the best among us is the one who is best to his family. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to be the best to his family. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

*“The best of you are the best to their families, and I am the best to my family.
When your companion dies, then do not abuse him.” [Tirmidhi]*

He would laugh and smile and entertain his wives. The Hadith Umm Zar’ is the long story the Prophet (peace be on him) told his wife Aisha, and it is classified by the scholars of hadith as entertaining your wife or husband.

Gifts to children

One of the Islamic principles of justice and good parenting is to fear Allah and give your children equal gifts in your lifetime. In your lifetime do not give your boys double what you give your girls. This is only the case after your death. In exceptional scenarios where one child needs more support, then you can give them extra, but in general and in normal circumstances, your gifts to your children should be equal. Once, a companion came and asked the Prophet (peace be on him) and to witness that he had gifted a garden to his son, but the Prophet (peace be on him) refused to witness it.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) asked, “Have you other children besides this one?” He said, “Yes.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) asked, “Have you awarded a gift like this to all of them.” He said, “No.” The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said, “I am not going to bear witness to this act of injustice.” [Bukhari]

If a child helps his father run his business, does his involvement in the business mean he can take more than his brothers and sisters? Yes, as he is growing the business for them. He should have extra as he is not a sleeping partner. He put his expertise, blood and sweat into it, so they are not equal.

If you have two children, and one child doesn't meet parents but the other one does, do the parents still have to give them equal gifts?

By law, the shariah scholar will divide the wealth according to shariah.

It is tough, but the responsibility lies on the son who is not fulfilling his obligation. If the parents try their best and make dua for Allah Almighty to open his heart, inshallah he will sort it out. They should keep reminding them and keep connecting him. Don't give up. Keep trying.

Regarding servants

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

Fear Allah in regard to what your right hand possesses. Feed them from what you eat; dress them from what you wear; and do not burden them with work that they do not have the energy for. Indeed Allah has given you possession of them, but if He willed He could surely have given them possession of you. [Muslim]

If they make mistakes, then be good to them. If you are nasty to them, they will be bad to you and your business will suffer. Therefore be good to your employees for the sake of your dunya and akhirah.

Some companies give their employees a share, and some companies squeeze every bit out of their employees, so they cannot wait till they get home.

In conclusion – loving for Allah’s sake

Ghazali’s 20 rules teach us how to get on with others and build closer ties with them. Overlook mistakes and give them preference in our dealings. In other words, it is to love others for His sake.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“Verily, Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection: Where are those who love each other for the sake of My glory? Today, I will shelter them in My shade on a day when there is no shade but Mine. (Muslim)

On the Day of Judgement, due to the extreme heat of the sun, people will be immersed in sweat according to their sins -some will have sweat rising up to their knees, some to their middle, and some their mouths. However those who loved each other for Allah’s sake will be spared this agony and given special shade – cooled by special air conditioning! Who are these people? Imam Suyyuti (may Allah be pleased with them) wrote a book about this and collected all the narrations in the Sunnah he could find about those who would get the shade of Allah’s throne. Among the 7 categories from the hadith are those who loved each other for the sake of Allah. They will not suffer at all. They will be VIPs, though they will be differing levels according to their deeds.

In another hadith Mu’adh ibn Jabal reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said Allah Almighty said:

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الْمُتَحَابُّونَ فِي جَلَالِي لَهُمْ مَنَابِرُ مِنْ نُورٍ يَعْطِطُهُمُ النَّبِيُّونَ وَالشُّهَدَاءُ

Those who love each other for the sake of my glory will be upon pulpits of light, admired by the prophets and the martyrs. (Tirmidhi)

Defining loving for Allah’s sake

You will not find the definition of loving for Allah’s sake in the English dictionary. Al Ghazali defined it as a love which is inconceivable without faith in Allah and the Last Day, for it is a love that is related to Allah and the Last Day. Al Ghazali elaborated on this in his *Ihya* in the volume on ‘The Rights of Companionship and Brotherhood’.

The first level of love

Al Ghazali says there are two levels of this love – the first level is loving those who enable you to serve Allah, for instance your servant because his service frees up your time or the one who sponsors a project and frees your heart from worrying about earning, so you can focus on your

studies and your project. Or loving your shaykh or your teacher or your student, because they benefit you in the akhirah.

The second level of love

The second level is to love the one who loves Allah and is loved by Allah Almighty for purely that reason. The love is not mixed with any dunya issues. These people are from the rabbaniyun (those who have lordly attributes), or one of the awliyah (close to Allah). Although we cannot recognise them, they have signs.

How can you identify those who are loved by Allah?

When Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

“When Allah loves a slave, calls out Jibril and says: ‘I love so-and-so; so love him’. Then Jibril loves him. After that he (Jibril) announces to the inhabitants of heavens that Allah loves so- and-so; so love him; and the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also love him and then make people on earth love him”. [Bukhari and Muslim]

Therefore when Allah Almighty loves someone, He puts acceptance in people’s hearts for this person and this means the doors are open for him and hearts cling to him because he is a man of God. He is *awliya ullah*.

Al Ghazali calls this level *aqmal* (better) and more perfect than the previous level. When you love this person you love everything he loves, when it is in line with the shariah. The shariah must always be your reference. Do not let it be contaminated with other practices.

Real awliya do not advertise themselves

Real awliya do not come with badges and signposts they hide themselves. Do not be fooled by imposters who claim they are awliya or that their group are awliya as they are deceitful and they trap people. There are many wolves lying in wait along the path to Allah.

Those who genuinely remind you of Allah will draw your heart to them. In their presence your heart pumps in a different way, due to the the beams of light emanating from their heart and penetrating your heart. Ya Rabb enable us to meet such people and be with them. These people are special; they have good character, charisma and a special way with people which makes you feel mercy in everything they do.

The magnetism of the Prophet (peace be on him)

The foremost example of this is of the Prophet (peace be on him). In his presence, the companions were so mesmerised that they sat as still as if birds were perched on their head whom they did not want to fly away. They wanted to invest every second in admiring him and listening to him and benefitting from his presence. They would notice time. This was the magnetism of Rasul Allah (peace be on him).

In his first and last Hajj which was a few weeks before he passed away, he addressed over 100,000 hajjis. Imagine how they could all hear him spread over that terrain. Jabir bin Abdillah narrated that they could hear his voice even when they were in their houses, not near him. Allah Almighty imbued his voice with the power to reach everywhere.

Instant bondship

When you meet someone for the first time and you feel instantly connected to them, and the light in their face it is the love of Allah in their heart which connects to the love of Allah in your heart – this is the bondship between you.

This is why you have to choose your friends because it makes or breaks you. You follow their footsteps and copy them, so when they are emulating the Prophet (peace be on him), you can feel the beauty of how they interact and behave. This is why the scholars are the heirs of the prophets.

There is a statement which could be from Imam Shafi that if the scholars are not *awliyahullah*, then who are? As the path to *wilayah* is clear: what makes you close to Allah is doing what He commanded you to. The path is to follow the Sunnah. The more you follow it, the closer you are to Allah Almighty.

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said that Allah (mighty and sublime be He) said:

My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him. [Bukhari]

Eethar – Put others before yourself

Those who excel demonstrate *eethar*, in other words they give preference to their brother over their self.

Love and hate for the sake of Allah

When you love for Allah's sake you also hate for Allah's sake. You do not join in and smile and laugh when people disobey Allah. You do not hate them, but their actions and you have to show them that you disapprove of their behaviour. When you do this you have achieved a good level.

If you love someone, let them know

In the Sunnah, if you love someone for Allah's sake, you should inform them. It is transferring emotions to actions. Inform them because it fosters love in the community. Your love is not based on looks or wealth but they recite the Quran with you or go to the mosque with you.

Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'di reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

"When one of you loves his brother, let him know." (Tirmidhi)

Be loyal to your friend

Part of loving someone is being loyal to them. It is not being fickle like a cat. In addition, there should not be *takaluf* (sense of burden) between you. You should be generous but not feel strained in the relationship.

Do not resent or hold grudges

Forgive and forget their mistakes. Just as you want them to forgive you, remember the good things and forget the bad things. And support them and make *du'a* for them.

When the angels tell you they love you!

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

“A man set out to visit a brother (in faith) in another town and Allah sent an angel on his way. When the man met the angel, the latter asked him, “Where do you intend to go?” He said, “I intend to visit my brother in this town.” The angel said, “Have you done any favour to him?” He said, “No, I have no desire except to visit him because I love him for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, and Glorious.” Thereupon the angel said, “I am a messenger to you from Allah (to inform you) that Allah loves you as you love him (for His sake)” (Muslim]

What great news! That the angels tell you they love you because you are doing this for Allah’s sake. It gives us a special feeling.

This concept raises us out of this materialistic world and gives us a different flavour, uncontaminated by the toxicity of dunya. It fills your heart with the love of Allah.

You need to train yourself to love others for Allah’s sake, maintain this and keep improving it.

We ask Allah Almighty to make us closer to Him and make us better people. Ameen.

About Al-Ghazali

Written by Dr Musharraf Hussain Al Azhari

His name was Abu Hamid Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Tusi al-Shafi al-Ghazali and he was honoured with the title of “Hujjatul Islam”, “Proof of Islam”. He was born in 1058 CE (450 AH). His birthplace is the town of Tabran in the district of Tous in the province of Khurasan (Iran). His father was a cotton merchant and therefore he is referred to as Ghazali. His early education was from local teachers, in his home town. He then moved to Jurjan (near the Caspian Sea) and studied under Imam Abu Nasr Ismaeli. The method of teaching was didactic, the teacher would deliver the lecture and the students took notes and compiled them. The young Ghazali was a brilliant student with an incisive wit and sharp intellect.

In those days there were many schools and colleges in every major town and city. However, Nishapur and Baghdad were the two most famous. Since Nishapur was closer to home, Imam Ghazali decided to go there. Here Imam Al-Haramain, the greatest luminary of his time taught students the Islamic Sciences. Nishapur was one of the famous centres for learning in the Muslim world. According to Shibli, the first Islamic college was established here in Nishapur by the name of Bahiqiyya. Imam Al-Haramain was the Grand Mufti as well as having the ear of the ruler. He was held in high esteem by the government and the public. He had an unrivalled reputation and status.

Imam Ghazali soon earned a special place amongst the students of Imam Al-Haramain. He was appointed as the “Mueed”, assistant teacher. Imam Ghazali began to write books and his teacher encouraged him in this endeavour. Soon his fame began to spread. It was around this time that Imam Ghazali was initiated in the spiritual order of Shaykh Farmadi.

Imam Al-Haramain died in 1086 CE (475 AH), Imam Ghazali decided to leave Nishapur and headed for Baghdad. This was the other great centre of learning and under the patronage of Nizamul Mulk, who had built the great university of Nizamiyya.

Life in Baghdad

Imam Ghazali was appointed as a teacher in this prestigious institution. Nizamul Mulk was an erudite scholar himself and loved the company of scholars, his court was like a debating society. This provided young scholars with an opportunity not only to show off their debating skills and depth of scholarship but to impress the royals. Imam Ghazali loved the pomp and ceremony of these occasions. It wasn't long before Imam Ghazali's genius became apparent, his debates, lectures and counselling were overwhelmingly impressive. His brilliance in all branches of learning was now well established and Nizamul Mulk recognised this. In 1092 CE at the young age of 34. Imam Ghazali was appointed the head of Nizamiyya, this was one of the highest-ranking civil positions and the most coveted place in the capital of the Muslim empire. Imam Ghazali had a lot of influence on the royal family, so much so that they listened to him and heeded his advice. His fame, riches. reputation and influence were at their zenith. He lived a life of luxury and was showered with worldly riches.

Imam Ghazali had wide-ranging interests, philosophy and spirituality were his favourite subjects. As his interest in spirituality deepened he became critical of the pomp, wealth and his love of status. A conflict began to brew inside him. He felt like leaving Baghdad and retiring into the wilderness. ‘For six months’ Imam Ghazali writes in his autobiography of this tense period “I was in a state of tremendous anxiety until I could not speak, nor eat, nor teach. Eventually I became ill, physicians declared me untreatable”.

He wrote. "I came to the conclusion that the blessings of the hereafter cannot be attained without Taqwa and giving up carnal desires and this can only happen once the love of the world disappears, until one renounces the world and yearns for the hereafter. Man must energetically and completely turn to his Lord and this cannot happen without giving up pomp and wealth. When I examined myself, I found myself deeply attached to the world. When I studied the motives behind my lecturing, I found it was merely for grandeur and status. I was now convinced that I stood on the brink of disaster. I reflected on this state for a long time. One day I would decide to leave Baghdad and free myself of these shackles but the next day I would change my mind. I would take one step forward and another backwards. In the morning I would yearn for the hereafter but by the evening those thoughts would be overwhelmed by worldly desires. The chains of carnal desires would pull me and the voice of faith would say go! Go! Only a few hours of life remain yet the journey is long, your works are merely for showing off and delusion, if you do not prepare for the hereafter now when will you do so? Finally, I decided to leave Baghdad. The scholars and the government officials pleaded with me to take back my decision, saying 'this will be bad luck for the Muslims, how can your departure be Islamically justifiable?' Whilst everyone was saying this I knew the truth and therefore left for Syria" (Al-Munqiz min Ad-dalal – The Saviour from the deviation).

An epic journey of self-discovery

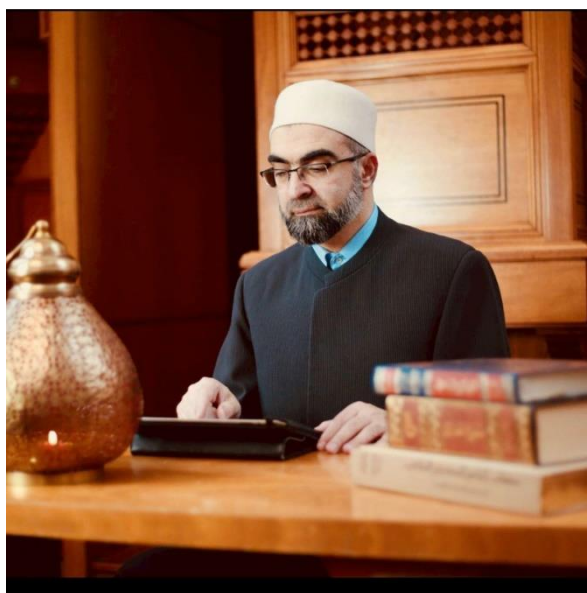
He travelled to Damascus to live in solitude and spent his time in devotion and self-purification. He would climb the western minaret of the Grand Umayyad Masjid and remain there all day submerged in Divine remembrance and meditation. He would also teach in the western wing of the Grand Masjid. After two years of devotion and spiritual exercises he moved to Jerusalem and stayed in the Dome of the Rock. From there he went to the town of Khaleef on the West Bank, at the tomb of Prophet Ibrahim, he made three pledges:

1. Never visit a royal court
2. Never accept royal gifts
3. Never debate with anyone

From there he decided to go on to Hajj. For ten long years, he remained on his journey of self-discovery and the search for the truth. Wondering through deserts, jungles, cities and mountains, often staying near the tombs of the saints. During this time Imam Ghazali wrote books and taught in seminaries and guided students. After roaming for ten long years and acquiring a deeper understanding of Islam, he once again returned to Baghdad. He was received with joy and offered the mantle of directorship of Nizamiyya once more. It is thought that it was here that he wrote his Magnum Opus 'The Revival of Religious Sciences'. This is one of the classics of Islamic scholarship. Imam Ghazali taught at Nizamiyya only for a short while before going back to his home town of Tabran. Here he established a small seminary where he taught and directed students.

He died on 14th Jamadi-al-Thani 505 AH (1111 CE) at the age of 53. His younger brother Ahmad Ghazali gives an account of his last moments: "On Monday morning, he woke up, he performed wudu and prayed salat al-Fajr and then asked for his shroud, kissing it he said, "I eagerly accept my Lord's command", he laid down and died. May Allah bless his soul".

About Shaykh Haytham Tamim



Shaykh Haytham Tamim, the founder and main teacher of the Utrujj Foundation defines himself as a knowledge seeker. Praise be to Allah, his Foundation was the pioneer in disseminating Islamic knowledge in the UK over 20 years ago.

His extensive expertise spans over 30 years across the main Islamic jurisprudence schools of thought and different Islamic denominations through highly advanced classical and religious texts.

With 29 links in his chain, Shaykh Haytham's unbroken chain of scholarship goes back the Prophet (peace be on him), and gave him the opportunity to study with some of the foremost scholars in their expertise. He holds some of the highest Ijazahs (certificates) in Quran, Hadith (the Prophetic traditions) and Fiqh (Islamic rulings).

His respected teachers include the late Professor Wahba Al-Zuhayli, the late Shaykh Muhammad Sukkar, the late Shaykh Khalil Al-Mays, Professor Ahmad Al-Haji Kurdi, the late Shaykh Abdul Razzaq Al-Halabi, the late Shaykh Adeeb Al-Kallas, the late Mulla Abdul 'Aleem Al-Zanki and Professor Mustafa Azami, Mufti Taqi Usmani, Shaykh Nizam Yaqoubi.

His own gift for teaching was evident when he gave his first sermon to a large audience at the age of 17, after which he studied in Damascus and returned to serve as a senior lecturer of Islamic Transactions and Comparative Jurisprudence at the Islamic University of Beirut (Shariah College).

Prior to coming to the UK, he established an office for the research and publication of important manuscripts and published three books on Comparative Jurisprudence (Fiqh). He also worked in Lebanese Shariah courts as a trainee judge.

In 2000, Shaykh Haytham moved to the UK, where he founded Utrujj to spread the message of Islam with an emphasis on clarity, authenticity and practicality.

Due to his wide breadth of experience, he is a scholar and advisor on Islamic Finance and Shariah for international organisations ranging from investment firms to legal and accountancy firms. In addition, he has 20 years of experience advising British lawyers, as well as charities such as Save the Children and UNICEF.

He is the Director of Shariah Solutions Limited, consultancy firm in Islamic Finance and also a member of several advisory roles on Shariah boards, and has assisted multiple institutions launch Islamic compliant products to serve the Muslim consumers of Europe and the Middle East.

Shaykh Haytham Tamim is leader of the Lebanese Sunni community in the UK under Dar Al-Fatwa in the UK and an authorised Faqih with knowledge of the Shariah.

He takes a keen interest in promoting love and tolerance within the Muslim community as well within wider society, and voicing the need for social justice.

Often consulted by his students for his wise, compassionate and balanced stance, he loves spreading knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah in a way that is authentic, relevant and down to earth.

Jazakumullahu khayran for spending time learning with us. We need your support to enable us to reach more people and spread authentic knowledge. Every contribution big or small is valuable to our future.

utrujj.org/giving/

'If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, his reward will be equivalent to those who follow him (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect.' [Muslim]



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