

Questions from Habib `Umar's Internet Lessons on Tazkiyah

Lesson 3 in Imam al-Haddad's "Beneficial Counsels"

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Answered by **Sayyidi al-Habib `Umar bin Hafiz** (may Allah preserve him and benefit us by him).

- 1) **How can a *murid* (seeker on the spiritual path) have guidance and direction from Allah at all times? I love a group of people and have not acted like them or caught up with them. What is the way to being in their hearts?**

Be sincere and true to Allah and follow them to the extent that you are able, and mention them and pray for them: these are means for Allah to place you in the hearts of those people. If someone enters the heart of a knower of Allah, the lights of gnosis come over him. Just like whenever rain falls on a place, it splashes around that place, thus when light pours upon the heart of a knower of Allah, and if one is in the heart of that knower, then the sprinkling of that downpour will fall upon the one who is in his heart. These are gifts from the All-Merciful, so be avid that you are in the heart of a knower of Allah. Our means to this is that we make them in our heart for the sake of Allah, and we emulate them and study their lives, behaviour and virtues and strive to be like them. The knowers of Allah say: *a sign of your loving Allah is your loving the Friends of Allah, and the sign of Allah's love for you is that His Friends love you.*

- 2) **I have a morning and evening *wird* (daily litanies), can I do my *wird* during the days of Hajj?**

Do your *wird* to the extent that you can, but if your Hajj rites distract you from them then make them up later as Hajj takes precedence. Perform the *wird* in your free time as you are able. May Allah make us of those who continually do good knowing our Prophet (peace and blessings of

Allah upon him and his family) whose action was constant said: “The most beloved of action to God is the one that is constant.”

3) What is the beginning of the path to Allah? Is there an end to this path, and how do we reach it?

Know that the beginning of the path is faith in Allah and performing pious deeds in accordance to the dictates of faith. The beginning of the path to Allah, Most High, is an inward matter that has an outward manifestation. The inward matter is a gift from Allah, an urge that causes one to truly reflect on the obligation of travelling to Allah while being afraid of being cut off from Him.

This urge causes the seeker firstly to truly repent from acts of disobedience and then to seek beneficial knowledge and to act in accordance with it. So the beginning of the path is this urge and true repentance. If a person acts in accordance with this, then it will bring him from a general knowledge of Allah to a special knowledge of Allah. The first footstep on this path is that there is no difference in one’s state whether one is alone or in the company of people. The seeker then continues to travel along the path and ascend. Even those have reached an advanced stage never reach ‘an end’ as the attributes, names, bounty and knowledge of the One they are travelling to are unlimited. Thus the seeker the seeker continues to ascend eternally.

4) What does it mean when they say that the Ba Alawi path is inwardly Shadhili and outwardly Ghazalian?

The various spiritual paths return to a foundation that is either Shadhili or Ghazalian. The foundation of the Shadhili way is establishing the station of *Shukr* (gratitude). The focus is on the striving of the heart, such that the seeker constantly witnesses the blessings of Allah and their Bestower, remains in the Divine presence and devotes himself entirely to Him. There is not a great deal of focus on abundant outward striving or attaining a great amount of outward knowledge.

In the Ghazalian path, however, there is more concern for attaining outward knowledge and acting according to it while striving to cleanse one’s actions from impurities. This leads to constant presence with Allah, which was the objective of the Shadhili path in the beginning.

Thus, the end of the two paths is the same. It is possible to combine the two and that is manifested in path of the Ba `Alawi. Along with their concern for outward knowledge, acting in accordance to it, and striving to perform outward works, those following the Ba `Alawi path attempt to firmly establish gratitude in their hearts and to attain constant presence with Allah. They thus combine these two works and two paths, which is why it is said that their path is outwardly Ghazalian and inwardly Shadhili.

5) I have a desire to stand in prayer in the night (*qiyam al-layl*), and I set my alarm clock. However I cannot wake up. How can I overcome my *nafs* (lower self)?

By being persistent and making use of both outward and inward means to help you wake up. Outward means include the use of an alarm clock, or making an agreement with a friend to wake you up, whether locally, or someone that calls you.

Inward means include making *Istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) just before dawn and just before sunset, and giving life to the time between *Maghrib* (the sunset prayer) and *`Isha* (the night prayer) by engaging in acts of goodness.

Before sleeping you should recite:

- The *tasbih* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught to his daughter Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra` and Sayyiduna `Ali ibn Abu Talib.:

Subhan Allah (transcendent is Allah) 33 times, *Alhamdulillah* (all praise belongs to Allah) 33 times and *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is most great) 34 times.

- The last four verses of *Surat al-Kahf* (18: 107-110):

انَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا (107)
 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حَوْلًا (108) قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ
 مَدَادًا لَكَلَّمْتُ رَبِّي لِنَفْدِ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ
 مَدَدًا (109) قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَى إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ
(أَحَدًا) (110)

6) **I feel spiritually weak during my menstrual cycle though I do maintain my *wird* – how can I overcome this?**

Remember that this is from Allah. Just as Allah has made things incumbent upon a woman who is pure He has made other things prohibited for a woman who is on her cycle. Performing that which is incumbent on her when she is pure is an act of worship and abstaining from performing it when she is on her cycle is also an act of worship. Doing your *adhkar* when you are on your cycle (except reciting the Qur'an) especially in the last part of the night is a means of drawing close to Allah. Remember that the best of women experienced this - the wives of the Prophets and women who were knowers of Allah - and they were able to reach the highest of stations, so there is no harm, weakness or lowliness in it.

7) **Is *sabr* (patience), in some states, considered blameworthy?**

Sabr in its true sense is only praiseworthy and is a cause of ascension. *Sabr* is to look at what you have been commanded to do and remain steadfast in perfecting it to the best of your ability and to be patient in abstaining from that which you have been prohibited from doing. Then you look at the various events that occur in your life. If something unavoidable occurs which is hard to take, then you must patiently bear it.

If a Muslim is humiliated in front of you or someone is oppressed and you are able to prevent such things happening but do nothing this is not regarded as *sabr*. Likewise to remain in the state which you are in, not taking the means to ascend to a higher state is not regarded as *sabr*. This is in fact weakness, laziness and cowardice. So patience is never blameworthy as it is defined in the Sacred Law. Rather it is a means of attaining limitless reward. Allah says: **Only those who are**

*patient will receive a reward without measure.*¹ He also says: *Give good tidings to the patient ones.*²

Sabr dictates that you should not be anxious when a problem arises that you cannot avert. You should instead be patient, surrender to Allah and fulfil your obligations with regards to the state that you are in.

8) How does one combine between accepting the will and decree of Allah and bettering one's state?

Being satisfied with Allah's decree means that you do not object to anything that He has decreed while at the same time you do not neglect what you are able to do to improve your own state. There is no contradiction between the two.

9) I fear that I learn and am deluded and do not act in accordance with what I convey to others. How can I overcome this?

You should obey the command of Allah and His Messenger, and teach. Part of acting on the knowledge that you learn is teaching it. You should dislike any delusion and pride that you have and strive to cleanse yourself from that. If you leave teaching altogether, then you become exposed to a subtle pride. Maybe Satan will lead those that leave good fearing for themselves pride, to a different type of pride so that they think that they are better than those that perform good, and are thus thrown into misfortune.

However the elect act out of obedience to Allah's commands and dislike every evil thought and reject it. They seek the aid of Allah and thus He takes them by the hand and causes them to ascend and He removes from them every harm.

May Allah make us from the people of presence and proximity.

10) It is difficult for me to oppose my lower self. How do I overcome its excuses?

To strive against it with insight. This means not listening to its excuses, and treating it harshly at times and giving it some of what it needs and loves at other times. Better than this is to be under

¹ *Al-Zumar*, 39.10

² *Al-Baqarah*, 2.155

the watchful eye of one of those that calls to Allah out of insight. Such a person is able to help you overcome your lower self. However strong the lower self is, Allah's power is greater. Seek refuge in Him and oppose your lower self and caprice. Be hard on your *nafs* sometimes, and gentle at other times. Sometimes being harsh is the very essence of mercy. Someone who is wise punishes a child for playing with matches, and does not worry that the child cries because he does not want him to burn himself. This is mercy and not harshness.

11) Does reading books, pondering them and studying them need permission? I love to listen to them being explained more than I love to read them by myself.

There is great benefit in the explanation of the scholars. Furthermore if you have permission (*ijazah*) from them in reading or studying a specific text it is more likely to be beneficial and your understanding will be deeper. However, every Muslim that studies these books will benefit, especially if one studies them with love, yearning and desire to travel the path.

12) How does one know if the Shaykh is pleased with the seeker?

The sign of this is true love in your heart for him and also your being content with that to which the Shaykh guides, invites and leads. This is reflected in your being well-pleased with Allah as your Lord and our Master Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) as your messenger and Islam as your religion, and your true desire to follow and to emulate the Messenger. These are all signs of their good pleasure.

May Allah grant us His good pleasure, the pleasure of the *shuyukh* (teachers), of our parents, of the elders, of the pious – none of these are sought except as a means to Allah's good pleasure and the pleasure of His Messenger. *Allah and His Messenger are more deserving that they please Him if they are indeed believers.*³

13) How can we make our young girls love modesty when we live in a society that has no regard for modesty?

By constantly mentioning to them the states and modesty of the Mothers of the Believers, the daughters of the Prophet (peace and blessing upon him), the women Companions and the women that Allah praised in the Qur'an. You should also mention to them the merit of modesty and its benefit in this life and the next. Finally you should make much du'a.

14) How is it possible to remove from the heart all fear of other than Allah and all hope in other than Allah?

³ *Al-Tawbah*, 9. 62

What is required is sincerely seeking this from Allah and seeking knowledge, specifically by reading the books of the people of Allah. These are the means of seeking all praiseworthy attributes.