

Servants of the Most Merciful

PodSeries - Vol 11



Achieve Noble Character

Servants of the Most Merciful

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Servants of the Most Merciful

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All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com.

Introduction

The characteristics of the true servants of Allah, the Exalted, are mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verses 63-77. It is these muslims who will be granted safety and great blessings in this world and in the next. Chapter 10 Yunus, verse 62:

“Unquestionably, [for] the allies of Allah there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

Whenever they face a trial they will be given the strength to overcome them so that they reap further blessings. When the entire creation will face the Day of Judgment Allah, the Exalted, will remove all grief from them. Chapter 21 Al Anbiya, verse 103:

“They will not be grieved by the greatest terror and the angels will meet them, [saying], “This is your Day which you have been promised””

Allah, the Exalted, boasts of these special servants to the Angels in the Heavens. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 5428. They are the ones who are brought near to Allah, the Exalted, in this world and will gain the special proximity of Allah, the Exalted, in the hereafter. Chapter 56 Al Waqi'ah, verses 10-12:

“And the forerunners, the forerunners. Those are the ones brought near [to Allah]. In the Gardens of Pleasure.”

They freed themselves from the servanthood of all other things and devoted themselves to the true obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. When they became His servants they became independent of the entire creation. But those who sought freedom from this servanthood only became servants of their desires and the material world. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 23:

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire...”

They have reached this rank by striving to emulate the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and his blessed Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all. But it is important to note this is not possible to achieve without knowledge. It was why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224, that gaining useful knowledge is a duty on all muslims.

It must be the mission of all muslims to emulate the good character of the servants of the Most Merciful so that they too can achieve success in this world and in the next. A muslim must always remember that nothing

will be heavier in the Scales of Judgment Day than good character. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2003.

Humility

The first quality of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in Chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 63:

“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily...”

The servants of Allah, the Exalted, have understood that anything good they possess is solely because Allah, the Exalted, granted it to them. And any evil they are saved from is because Allah, the Exalted, protected them. Is it not foolish to be proud of something that does not belong to someone? Just like a person does not boast about a sports car which does not belong to them muslims must realize nothing in reality belongs to them. This attitude ensures one remains humble at all times. The humble servants of Allah, the Exalted, fully believe in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Bukhari, number 5673, which declares that the righteous deeds of a person will not take them to Paradise. Only the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, can cause this to occur. This is because every righteous deed is only possible when Allah, the Exalted, provides one with the knowledge, strength, opportunity and inspiration to perform it. Even the acceptance of the deed is dependent on the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. When one bares this in mind it saves them from pride and inspires them to adopt humility. One should always remember that being humble is not a sign of weakness as Islam has encouraged one to defend themselves if necessary. In other words, Islam teaches muslims to be humble without weakness. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in

Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2029, that whoever humbles himself before Allah, the Exalted, will be raised by Him. So in reality, humility leads to honor in both worlds. One only needs to reflect on the most humble of the creation to understand this fact namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah, the Exalted, has clearly ordered people by ordering the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, to adopt this important quality. Chapter 26 Ash Shu'ara, verse 215:

“And lower your wing [i.e., show kindness] to those who follow you of the believers.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, led a humble life. For example, he happily carried out the domestic duties at home thereby proving these chores are gender-neutral. This is confirmed in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 538.

Humility is an inner characteristic that manifests outwards such as the way one walks. This is discussed in another verse chapter 31 Luqman, verse 18:

“And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly...”

Allah, the Exalted, has made it clear that Paradise is for the humble servants who possess no trace of pride. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 83:

“That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”

In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1998, that whoever possesses an atom's worth of pride will not enter Paradise. Only Allah, the Exalted, has the right to be proud as He is the Creator, Sustainer and Owner of the entire universe.

It is important to note, pride is when one believes they are superior to others and rejects the truth when it is presented to them as they dislike accepting the truth when it comes from other than them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4092.

Ignorance

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful that is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 63, is that they avoid ignorance and the ignorant.

“...and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace.”

Specifically, when people act in a foolish way they do not reply in the same way. Instead, they show patience and treat these people kindly which is shown through their speech and actions. They understand that the best response they can give a foolish person is to leave them in peace as replying to them in an evil way only spurs them on. This does not mean they do not defend themselves as Islam permits this but they have adopted humility without weakness. They do not wish to waste their time on people who are only looking for trouble. Ignorance is a disliked characteristic in Islam and is one of the reasons why seeking knowledge is a duty on all muslims. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224. The ignorant commit sins without even realising it therefore, the true servants of the Most Merciful avoid its people and this characteristic by dedicating time to studying the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and strive to adopt these teachings into their lives through actions. Chapter 39 Az Zumar, verse 9:

“...Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"..."

The Holy Quran has made it clear that an ignorant person cannot attain true piety. Chapter 35 Fatir, verse 28:

“...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...”

This is because knowledge is required in order to adopt the good characteristics and avoid the evil traits advised in Islamic teachings. If one is unaware of an evil trait how can they avoid or remove it from their character?

One should not only strive to attain and act on Islamic knowledge but they should always maintain respect for those who possess knowledge as this keeps one away from pride.

The Holy Quran advises muslims to turn away from the company of the ignorant as they can only inspire their friends towards pointless or evil things. Chapter 28 Al Qasas, verse 55:

"And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say, "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant.""

This does not mean one should not advise or teach the ignorant but this should be left to educated muslims who have adopted the correct characteristics required to spread the message of Islam correctly.

The truly ignorant is not someone who lacks knowledge. In truth, the ignorant is someone who does not act on their knowledge. Such a person is ignorant even if they possess much knowledge. Acting on knowledge is knowledge which is beneficial. Everything else is only knowledge of the tongue which will not benefit its possessor. In actual fact this knowledge will testify against a person on Judgment Day. So muslims should strive to learn and act on Islamic knowledge and seek refuge with Allah, the Exalted, from knowledge which does not benefit as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3843.

The Night Prayer

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 64:

“And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer].”

They prove their sincerity towards Allah, the Exalted, by sacrificing some of their sleep and rest in order to worship Him when no other eyes are watching them. The previous characteristics mentioned those traits which are public therefore one can accuse these servants of showing off. But this characteristic proves their sincerity. This verse clearly indicates that the true servants of the Most Merciful are those who have established their obligatory prayers. One only offers voluntary prayers regularly after they have established the obligatory prayers. There is no success without this. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has promised Paradise to the one who correctly establishes their prayers in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 1401. Offering the prayer is a means to having an intimate conversation with Allah, the Exalted. It is a sign of one's servanthood to Allah, the Exalted.

The night prayer has countless virtues. For example, a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 1614, advises that it is the best voluntary prayer. The night is when Allah, the Exalted, descends to the Heavens of this world according to His infinite dignity and invites people towards

His forgiveness and mercy. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6321. No one will have a rank higher on Judgment Day or in Paradise than the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and this rank has been directly connected to the night prayer. Chapter 17 Al Isra, verse 79:

“And from [part of] the night, pray with it [i.e., recitation of the Quran] as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.”

This shows that those who establish the night voluntary prayer will be blessed with the highest ranks in both worlds. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised that one is closest to Allah, the Exalted, in the last part of the night in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3579. Therefore, one can derive countless blessings if they are awake and remembering Allah, the Exalted, at this time.

All muslims desire their supplications to be answered and their needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, they should strive to offer the voluntary night prayer as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1770, that there is a special hour in every night when good supplications are always answered.

Establishing the night prayer is an excellent way to prevent one from committing sins, it encourages them to avoid pointless social gatherings

and it protects a person from many physical illnesses. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3549.

One should prepare for the night prayer by not over eating or drinking especially, before bed as it induces laziness. One should not unnecessarily tire themselves out during the day. A short nap during the day can help with this. Finally, one should avoid sins and strive to obey Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience as the obedient find it easier to offer the voluntary night prayer.

Worship during the night is blessed as each person is given what they desire. Those who desire a difficulty to be removed are swiftly answered. Those who wish to show their gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, achieve the status of a truly grateful servant. Those who desire Paradise have the doors of mercy and blessings opened for them. Those who desire to be saved from Hell are granted protection. And those who desire nothing except their Lord are blessed with His intimacy and closeness.

Fear of Allah, the Exalted

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verses 65-66:

“And those who say, "Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering. Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence.”

A supplication has been recorded in these verses which show the fear the true servants of the Most Merciful possess. They fear disobeying Allah, the Exalted, and thus entering Hell. This is a proof of their zeal to obey Allah, the Exalted, at all times. They are not like those wishful thinkers who feel no fear of Allah, the Exalted, by disobeying Him yet, hope for salvation. The true servants of the Most Merciful fulfil the characteristic of true hope in Allah, the Exalted, by striving sincerely for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, in all their activities and then hope for salvation.

They do not take pride in their many acts of righteousness as they know nothing can save them from the fire of Hell and admit them into Paradise except the mercy of Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6463. They prove this belief through their actions by constantly seeking refuge with Allah, the Exalted, through His obedience.

The true servants of the Most Merciful understand that when people reach the hereafter they will regret their sins and not performing more righteous deeds. Chapter 89 Al Fajr, verses 23-24:

“And brought [within view], that Day, is Hell - that Day, man will remember, but how [i.e., what good] to him will be the remembrance? He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent ahead [some good] for my life."”

This causes them to hasten towards righteous deeds such as the voluntary night prayer mentioned in the earlier verses. They hasten to seek refuge with Allah, the Exalted, through sincere obedience by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience. Whenever they slip up and commit a sin they hasten towards sincere repentance pleading to Allah, the Exalted, to forgive them. They take account of themselves regularly so that they can increase their obedience to Allah, the Exalted. It has been advised in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4260, that this is the quality of a wise person.

Many are distracted from Hell and its punishments by the glitter and pomp of this world they on the other hand keep the Day of Judgement and encountering Hell always in their minds. It is as if they can witness Hell being brought forward by seventy thousand ropes with each rope being pulled by seventy thousand Angels. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7164. When one leads their life like this they busy themselves fulfilling their responsibilities and duties according to the teachings of Islam, striving in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, and seeking His refuge from an evil end.

Balanced Spending

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 67:

“And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate.”

They understand that in reality everything they possess belongs to Allah, the Exalted, and it was only given to them as a loan. So they therefore return the loan to Allah, the Exalted, by using their blessings, such as their wealth, in the way prescribed by Islam without being stingy, excessive, wasteful or extravagant. They realise that their wealth and other blessings are a test from Allah, the Exalted, so they behave as truly grateful servants and pass this test by using their wealth and other blessings in the correct way. Chapter 67 Al Mulk, verse 2:

“[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed...”

They have learnt that Allah, the Exalted, dislikes extravagance so they spend without being wasteful. Chapter 6 Al An'am, verse 141:

“...And be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess.”

They avoid being stingy at all costs as they are aware of the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1961, which warns that the greedy person is far from Allah, the Exalted, far from Paradise, far from people and are instead close to the fire of Hell. This same Hadith advises that Allah, the Exalted, prefers an ignorant generous person more than a stingy worshipper.

The servants of the Most Merciful avoid greed as they are fully aware of the fact that Allah, the Exalted, provides them with provision and has even taken an oath on it. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verses 22-23:

“And in the heaven is your provision and whatever you are promised. Then by the Lord of the heaven and earth, indeed, it is truth - just as [sure as] it is that you are speaking.”

In fact, the provision of the entire creation was allocated and recorded over fifty thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6748.

Because of these divine teachings and others they avoid the two extreme attitudes of extravagance and greed. And instead remain in the middle by spending when necessary and withholding when necessary.

They avoid all forms of unlawful wealth knowing that Allah, the Exalted, will not accept the supplication of the one who is sustained on the unlawful. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2346. If Allah, the Exalted, rejects their supplication how will He accept any of their deeds?

In another Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised that Allah, the Exalted, only accepts charity from lawful wealth. This Hadith also highlights one's great reward when they give charity for the sake of Allah, the Exalted, from their lawful wealth. Allah, the Exalted, will give a mountain worth of reward for lawful charity even if it is only a single date fruit in size.

The true servants of the Most Merciful always donate their obligatory charity knowing there are severe penalties for not fulfilling this important duty. Chapter 3 Alea Imran, verse 180:

“And let not those who [greedily] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection...”

Instead of greedily chasing excess wealth the servants of the Most Merciful take what they need in order to fulfil their responsibilities and donate the rest for the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted. This is the way one can pass the test and trial of wealth.

In fact, they have understood that a true servant of Allah, the Exalted, always donates more than the obligatory charity as this has been indicated in the Holy Quran and the Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. For example Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 12:

"...And Allah said, "I am with you. If you establish prayer and give zakah and believe in My messengers and support them and loan Allah a goodly loan..."

A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1671, advises that charity is due every day on behalf of every joint in the body of every muslim. This is obviously not referring to the obligatory charity which is offered annually.

It is important to note, charity is not only restricted to wealth. Charity can be offered in different ways for example, commanding good and forbidding evil is an act of charity. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 1671.

The verse, quoted in the beginning, which mentions the spending habits of the true servants of the Most Merciful, can include having a balance approach to all forms of charity, such as dedicating one's time to helping others. The one who does not find a balance will either dedicate too much time to helping others which causes them to neglect their own duties and responsibilities. Those who do not spend enough time helping others will become self-centred and only worry about themselves which is not the attitude of a true muslim.

The true servants of the Most Merciful always have the correct intention when spending. They do not nullify their charity by reminding others of their favours. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 264:

“O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders [of it] or injury...”

As they spend sincerely for Allah, the Exalted, they do not seek anything else from anyone else. Because of their pious intention Allah, the Exalted, rewards them even when they spend on things which appear worldly for example, on their family. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 4006.

They know that their righteous spending is a favour from Allah, the Exalted, as they would never be able to obtain this balance without the

mercy of Allah, the Exalted, therefore they remain grateful at all times. In fact, they are fearful that their righteous spending will not be accepted by Allah, the Exalted, due to some hidden fault such as insincerity. Chapter 23 Al Mu'minun, verse 60:

“And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3175, that this verse refers to the true servants of the Most Merciful.

Polytheism

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 68:

“And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity...”

This verse indicates the importance of a pure intention to only please Allah, the Exalted, when performing deeds. The true servants of the Most Merciful put aside all other intentions and desires and only obey Allah, the Exalted, in order to fulfil the purpose of their creation which is servanthood to Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 51 Adh Dhariyat, verse 56:

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”

Polytheism can be classified as greater and minor. The greater type is when one believes in more than one God. If a person dies in this state they will not be forgiven. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 48:

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him...”

This is the greatest sin one can commit which has been confirmed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6273. It is considered a great treachery to firstly deny the favours one has done to another and it is even worse to use these favours against the one who gave them. If this is true between two people can one imagine the greatness of the treachery of a person who behaves like this with Allah, the Exalted, when He alone provides the creation with countless blessings?

The minor type of polytheism is when one shows off their actions. This has been confirmed in many Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3989. On Judgment Day those who performed deeds to please others besides Allah, the Exalted, will be commanded to gain their reward from them which will not be possible. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3154. This is the one who has taken their desire as their lord as they act in order to fulfil their desires instead of acting to please Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 45 Al Jathiyah, verse 23:

“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire...”

One only acts for the sake of another as they believe the person will somehow grant them a blessing or protect them from some harm. This quality is only possessed by Allah, the Exalted, therefore, acting for the sake of other than Allah, the Exalted, is polytheism and simply foolish.

If a muslim firstly intends to please Allah, the Exalted, and then changes their intention because of some external factor as long as they struggle with themselves and try to return to their initial intention it is hoped that they will be granted reward for their original intention and inner struggle to keep it purified.

For those who mix their intention in religious acts to please Allah, the Exalted, and to gain some worldly thing it is debatable whether they receive any reward in the hereafter for the deed. Some scholars believe they will receive full reward as long as the worldly desire is not unlawful. Some believe a muslim will be rewarded partially because of their dual intention. Other scholars believe they will gain no reward as they partnered their intention with pleasing Allah, the Exalted, which can be considered an aspect of minor polytheism. Therefore, a wise muslim should choose the safest option and only perform religious deeds to please Allah, the Exalted and not mix their intention with some lawful worldly gain.

Respect Life

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 68:

“...or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right...”

The true servants of Allah, the Exalted, respect all forms of life. They obey the teachings of Islam which clearly prescribes that mercy should be shown to all of creation. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6028, that whoever does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy by Allah, the Exalted. Islam not only advises the kind treatment of people but also prescribes it for animals. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2550. No other religion places such value on human life. The Holy Quran compares the killing of one innocent person to the killing of the whole of mankind. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 32:

“...kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely...”

This verse alone is enough to deter those people who claim to be killing innocent people in the name of Islam. This verse proves that their real evil intention is to gain wealth and power which has nothing to do with Islam.

Not harming others is so important that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 4998, that a person cannot be a true muslim until other people irrespective of their faith are safe from their tongue and actions. If this is the case for only harming others how can Islam permit the killing of innocent people? In fact, this is answered in this same Hadith. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warns that a person cannot be a true believer until the lives and belongings of others are not safe from their actions.

Those who claim to follow the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, should know that he never harmed another person unless it was in self-defence against a male soldier. He never harmed a woman, the elderly or a child. In fact, he never took revenge for himself and only applied the punishment ordained by Allah, the Exalted, as the head of state to those who crossed the limits. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6050. This is how muslims must behave under all circumstances if they claim to be the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

A muslim has been given permission to defend themselves, their families and belongings. But all of this has limits. In no way does a muslim have permission to strike first and take the life of an innocent person. Muslims

should therefore treat others how they wish to be treated meaning, with respect and mercy.

Illegal Relationships

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 68:

“...and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty.”

The true servants of Allah, the Exalted, avoid all forms of illegal relationships. The fact that adultery has been placed next to polytheism and killing an innocent person in this verse indicates its severity.

Muslims should take precautions in order to avoid being tempted into illegal relationships. Firstly, they should learn to lower their gaze. This does not mean one should always stare at their shoes but it means they should avoid looking around unnecessary especially in public places. They should avoid staring at others and maintain respect for the opposite gender. Just like a muslim would not like someone staring at their sister or daughter they should not stare at other people's sisters and daughters. Chapter 24 An Nur, verse 30:

“Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision¹ and guard their private parts. That is purer for them...”

Whenever possible a muslim should avoid spending time alone with the opposite gender unless they are related in a way which prohibits marriage. This has been advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 1862.

Muslims should dress and behave with modesty. Dressing modestly avoids attracting the glances of strangers and behaving modestly prevents one from taking the initial steps which could lead to an illegal relationship such as talking unnecessarily to the opposite gender.

Understanding the blessings of avoiding illegal relationships is another way to protect oneself from them. For example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has guaranteed Paradise to the one who safeguards their tongue and chastity. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2408.

Fearing the punishment of being involved in illegal relationships will also aid a muslim to avoid them. For example, faith will depart from the person who is committing fornication. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4690.

In reality, a muslim does not need illegal relationships as Islam prescribes marriage. Those who cannot afford to marry should fast often

as this also helps to control one's desires and actions. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 3398.

Sincere Repentance

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verses 70-71:

“Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance.”

These verses indicate that the true servants of the Most Merciful are not perfect human beings. Nor does Allah, the Exalted, expect them to be. So the first thing to note is that a muslim should never give up hope in the infinite mercy of Allah, the Exalted, as this can take them towards unbelief. Chapter 12 Yusuf, verse 87:

“...Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.”

In fact, apart from major polytheism Allah, the Exalted, forgives all sins. Chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 116:

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills...”

As long as a muslim has a breath left in them it is never too late to turn back to Allah, the Exalted, in sincere repentance. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4253.

None the less it is vital for all muslims to avoid all sins whether they are major or minor as the time of death is unknown. If a muslim keeps delaying sincere repentance they may encounter death unprepared. Then they will be left with a great regret. In fact, delaying repentance believing one's sins are insignificant is a sign of a wicked person according to the Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2497. This Hadith advises that a good person sees their sins as if they were a mountain about to fall on them so they hasten to sincere repentance without delay.

Minor sins can be erased by righteous deeds but major sins require sincere repentance. This has been indicated in chapter 4 An Nisa, verse 31:

“If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise].”

Sincere repentance includes feeling regret over the sin, seeking forgiveness from Allah, the Exalted, sincerely promising not to return to the sin or a similar sin again and where possible to make up for any violations. If the sin is against people then the muslim, if possible, must seek their forgiveness and restore their rights. If the person does not forgive them then justice will be established on Judgement Day. The good deeds of the oppressor will be given to their victim and if required the victim's sins will be given to their oppressor. This may well cause the oppressor to be hurled into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

Changing for the Better

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 71:

“And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance.”

One of the signs of sincere repentance being accepted by Allah, the Exalted, is indicated in this verse. After repenting inwardly and through words a muslim must support this by performing righteous deeds and abstaining from further sins. In fact, when one performs righteous deeds correctly such as the prayer it will protect them from persisting on sins. Chapter 29 Al Ankabut, verse 45:

“...Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing...”

After sincere repentance a muslim not only improves their relationship with Allah, the Exalted, but they change their character for the better so that they treat people more kindly. In order to inspire muslims to pursue the path of the true servants of the Most Merciful Allah, the Exalted, gives the glad tidings to those who sincerely repent that He will transform their evil deeds into good deeds. Chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 70:

“...For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good...”

This blessing is much greater than erasing one's sins. Therefore, muslims must take advantage of the time they have been given by sincerely repenting from sins and striving to act rightly by fulfilling the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience.

Perjury

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 72:

“And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood...”

This verse warns that the true servants of the Most Merciful do not give false testimony. Unfortunately, this commonly occurs especially in third world countries where muslims file false claims in court in order to take something which does not belong to them, such as wealth and properties. According to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2654, perjury is one of the greatest of major sins. In fact, this Hadith places perjury next to polytheism and disobedience to parents.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, gave a severe warning in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 2373, that a person who does not sincerely repent from being a false witness will not move on the Day of Judgment until Allah, the Exalted, sends them to Hell. In fact, the one who acts as a false witness in order to take something which they have no right to will be sent to Hell even if the thing they took was a twig of a tree. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 353. Being a false witness is a serious sin as it includes many other terrible sins, such as lying. This sin against people will not be forgiven by Allah, the Exalted, until the victim forgives them first. If they do not their good deeds will be given to their victim and if necessary the sins of their victim will be given to them on Judgment Day

in order to establish justice. This may cause the false witness to be hurled into Hell. This has been confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579. The false witness also commits a sin if they testify on someone else's behalf so that the latter can take something which they have no right to. This attitude clearly challenges the command of the Holy Quran which advises muslims to not aid each other in evil but to instead help each other in good things. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 2:

“...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...”

The false witness will also commit further sins by using something which has been obtained unlawfully. For example, if they obtained wealth in this manner and then used it to perform the Holy Pilgrimage. Their Holy Pilgrimage will be rejected as Allah, the Exalted, only accepts the lawful. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2342. It is a duty on all muslims to always speak the truth whether it is in normal everyday conversations or under oath in a court case. Lying in all forms leads to sins which in turn leads to Hell. The one who continues lying will be recorded as a great liar by Allah, the Exalted. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1971. It is feared that this great liar will be sent to Hell on Judgement Day. Chapter 3 Alea Imran, verse 61:

“...invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars [among us].”

Vain Things

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 72:

“...and when they pass near ill speech, they pass by with dignity.”

This verse indicates that the true servants of the Most Merciful avoid all things which derive no benefit in this world or the next whether it is in speech or actions. It is important to note, that there are three types of speech and actions. One should keep silent and refrain from the first type which is completely harmful to one's worldly and religious life. The second type simply wastes time which will be a great regret on the Day of Judgment. This type is speech or actions which is neither beneficial nor harmful to one's worldly or religious life. The last type one should engage in is beneficial speech and actions. According to this structure two thirds of speech and actions should be removed from one's life.

In most cases, vain talk is not regarded a sin. But it will cause one to waste their precious time. In addition, unnecessary speech usually leads to sinful speech such as backbiting. It is extremely rare for people to discuss something which is not beneficial in either this world or the next without eventually committing a sin. One should bear in mind that their speech is in fact a letter which they write to Allah, the Exalted. It would be embarrassing for a person to fill this letter up with excess words which are of no benefit to them or others in this world or the next. In fact,

the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has declared in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2408, that Allah, the Exalted, hates when people utter useless words. It is clear from many Hadiths that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not utter unnecessary words and showed a dislike for it. An example is found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 211. Therefore, it is the duty of a muslim to avoid this trait.

It is important to note, that this verse also indicates that the true servants of the Most Merciful do not commit sins through their speech. How can they when they do not even utter words which are not considered sinful namely, vain speech?

Muslims should listen and learn from them so that they can adopt the important characteristic of only speaking good words or remaining silent. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 176.

It is important to understand, contrary to what some people believe a person who has not purified their speech cannot have a purified heart or body. This has been indicated in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2407.

In addition, this verse also indicates the importance of good companions. In fact, a person cannot be a good companion until they learn to control their speech. This is because a person will be influenced by their companions, which is warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4833. If a person occupies their time with vain speech

and actions then most likely their friends will do the same. This is why it is vital for all muslims to carefully choose their companions and advise others such as their children to do the same. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 67:

“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”

Words and Actions

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 73:

“And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall upon them deaf and blind.”

This verse indicates that the true servants of the Most Merciful prove their servant hood through actions not just words by listening, understanding and acting on the teachings of Islam. Many muslims recite the Holy Quran yet, feel disconnected from Allah, the Exalted. This is because they only fulfil the first aspect of the Holy Quran, which is reciting it. In most cases, these muslims do not understand the Arabic language so how can the Holy Quran affect their behaviour? In reality, these people act as if they are deaf and blind to the Holy Quran as they do not bother fulfilling the other and more important aspects of the Holy Quran. The second aspect is to understand it which can be done by studying its authentic and approved interpretations. The final aspect of the Holy Quran is acting on its teachings. It is simply not good enough to wrap it up in a nice clothe and place it on a high shelf in one's home. The Holy Quran is book of guidance not a home ornament. How can one be guided by it if they do not fulfil all the aspects of it? This is what the true servants of the Most Merciful strive to do. It is clear from this verse that ignorance and true servant hood to Allah, the Exalted, cannot be found together in a single heart.

A Pious Family

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned in chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 74:

“And those who say, "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes...”

This verse indicates the importance of marrying according to the teachings of Islam. This means the true servants of the Most Merciful follow the advice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, found in Sahih Muslim, number 3635, when choosing who to marry. This Hadith advises that a person is married for their beauty, lineage, wealth or for their piety. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, advised muslims to marry someone who possesses piety.

It is important to understand that the first three things mentioned in this Hadith are very transient and imperfect. They may give someone temporary happiness but ultimately these things will become a burden for them as they are linked to the material world and not to the thing which grants ultimate and permanent success namely, faith. One only needs to observe the rich and famous in order to understand that wealth does not bring happiness. In fact, the rich are the most unsatisfied and unhappy people on Earth. Marrying someone for the sake of their lineage is foolish as it does not guarantee the person will make a good spouse. In fact, if the marriage does not work out it destroys the family

bond the two families possessed before the marriage. Marrying only for the sake of beauty meaning, love is not wise as this is a fickle emotion which changes with the passing of time and with one's mood. How many couples supposedly drowned in love ended up hating each other?

But it is important to note that this Hadith does not mean one should find a spouse who is poor as it is important to get married to someone who can financially support a family. Neither does it mean one should not be attracted to their spouse as this is an important aspect of a healthy marriage. But this Hadith means that these things should not be the main or ultimate reason someone gets married.

The main and ultimate quality a muslim should look for in a spouse is piety. This is when a muslim fulfills the commands of Allah, the Exalted, refrains from His prohibitions and faces destiny with patience. Put simply, the one who fears Allah, the Exalted, will treat their spouse well in both times of happiness and difficulty. On the other hand, those who are irreligious will mistreat their spouse whenever they are upset. This is one of the main reasons why domestic violence has increased amongst muslims in recent years.

The true servants of the Most Merciful act on the advice given in this Hadith and through it they fulfil an aspect which helps them perfect their faith. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2521. Only through this behaviour can a muslim achieve the coolness of their eyes through their spouse which is indicated in this verse.

In order to achieve the second thing mentioned in this verse namely, a pious child, a parent must educate their child to adopt piety firstly by leading by example and giving their child a practical demonstration of piety. Secondly, they should teach them from a young age the different aspects of piety and noble character taught in the Holy Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This can be summed up into three things namely, to fulfil the commands of Allah, the Exalted, to refrain from His prohibitions and to face destiny with patience.

Only when a parent takes these steps can they fulfil the supplication in this verse. Only then will their child benefit them in this world and the next. Neglecting this duty will only cause one's child to become a source of distress for them in both worlds.

Noble Character

The next characteristic of the true servants of the Most Merciful is mentioned at the end of chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 74:

“And those who say, "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us a leader [i.e., example] for the righteous.”

In reality, this verse does not mean the true servants of the Most Merciful desire to be religious or worldly leaders. It actually means that they desire to adopt the qualities of the leaders of mankind, such as the Holy Prophets, peace be upon them, as they are the best and most beloved to Allah, the Exalted. This supplication is an indirect way of desiring the love of Allah, the Exalted. This verse shows that this cannot be obtained without striving practically, which is further supported by a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6502. It advises that after fulfilling the obligatory duties and striving to perform voluntary good deeds one becomes a beloved of Allah, the Exalted. Therefore, a muslim must strive to perform all the things loved by Allah, the Exalted, and abstain from all things disliked by Allah, the Exalted, if they desire to adopt the best characteristics and become a beloved of Allah, the Exalted.

In addition, this part of the verse indicates that acting in the manner discussed will cause one to fulfil the supplication mentioned at the start

of this verse which was discussed in the previous chapter. Namely, to desire to have a pious family so that they become a great asset for a muslim instead of a burden in both worlds.

This part of the verse can also mean that the true servants of the Most Merciful desire and strive to fulfil the important duty of commanding good and forbidding evil so that they are rewarded for those who heed and act on their advice. This has been advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 2351. And as indicated by this Hadith the true servants of the Most Merciful fear becoming a cause for the misguidance of others. This will only cause one's sins to increase depending on how many people a person misguides.

They desire to be a positive role model for those under their care. This is an important duty on all muslims according to a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 2928.

To conclude this book, all muslims must strive to adopt the characteristics of the true servants of the Most Merciful. Through this and the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, will they be blessed in this world and find a refuge and an eternal resting place in the next world. This has been indicated in the next verse. Chapter 25 Al Furqan, verse 75:

“Those will be awarded the Chamber for what they patiently endured, and they will be received therein with greetings and [words of] peace.”

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