



How to Find Peace and Serenity



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■ Introduction

All people since life started on earth have been searching for happiness.

Many went after physical pleasures thinking that it is the ultimate path to a happy life, but sooner or later found out that these types of pleasures fade away with time. When this happens, they are left lonely and unhappy.

Others seek happiness through amassing wealth and money. They dedicated their lives to money, and for them their bank accounts were more important than anything else in the world. They made a lot of money, and saved most of it, but towards the end of their lives discovered that they were also lonely and sad.

So what is the real path for a happy life?

And how does one achieve that happiness and maintain it throughout life's different phases, from the youth years till elderly age?

This is the topic and main issue of this new Onislam e-book, which we hope will present some useful answers



and provide its readers with inspiration and ideas through the following sections.



CHAPTER ONE

Balance Between the Physical & the Spiritual

- *Inner Peace and the Practical Side of Life*
- *Unplug: Focus on Your Islam*
- *Moderation and Recreation: The Perfect Balance*



Inner Peace and the Practical Side of Life

In the turbulent world of the 21st. century, it is not easy for many people to find peace.



Conflicts, protests, struggles, natural disasters and human tragedies are spreading fast around the world, and most of humanity, are living in a state of economic fear and instability.

What will happen tomorrow?

Nobody knows.

In this uncertain environment where external peace is difficult to find, a Muslim can at least search for inner peace.



There are many elements needed to reach a state of inner peace and knowing the main ingredients required for finding peace makes it easier to reach the right destination.

So what are the main ingredients of inner peace?

1- As regards day-to-day life, finding peace of mind is an important key for reaching a state of inner peace, and this involves many practical details such as lowering expectations of this worldly life, living a sustainable life free of debt and therefore free of worries, and other important matters to be detailed.

2- A believer's attitude towards life, such as patience, and inner feelings, like thankfulness and contentment, are crucial for finding inner peace.

3- One's relation with Allah, trusting Him, and doing one's best to come closer to Him, are all required elements for finding peace, as at the end of the day, as mentioned in the Quran:

{with the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace} (13:28)



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Practical Matters: The Physical & Material Aspects

What are the most important worries most people have in their daily lives?

People have many worries, including debts, finding good friends, dealing with other people, dealing with injustice, not having enough time, too much work, worrying about the future, dealing with life's problems, and in general being dissatisfied with what they have.

Each of these worries has a remedy, and the following ideas are reminders that aim to help us find inner peace and tranquility.

Get Out of Debt

One of the main concerns most people have is being in debt and being worried about how to pay the next due payment, whether for credit card debts, bank loans, or similar obligations. Today's consumer society encourages us day and night to buy new products, many of which we don't really need, and through aggressive marketing campaigns many people find themselves gradually going



into increasing levels of debt, month after month, and year after year.

Being caught in the debt trap takes away part of a person's freedom, and when this happens one feels worried when there are too many debts to repay, and when monthly expenses no longer balance with monthly income. At this stage, one's peace of mind totally evaporates, as worries can easily turn into a nightmare which disturbs the balance in life, and may reach the point described in this hadith "When a man gets into debt, he speak and tells lies, and he makes a promise and breaks it." So the first important advice is don't get into debt.

Keep Good Company

Meeting friends and relatives on social occasions and during weekends and holidays gives an important dimension to our social lives. By sharing and caring, one gets away from the daily routine of work and study, and gets involved with a wider circle of people one loves.

But be careful. A good friend no doubt helps his friend on the path towards Allah, and vice versa. So be very careful who you take as a close friend. The best friend is the one



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who reminds you of God when you forget, and encourages you to do good to others and live a decent life that pleases Allah. Keeping away from bad friends and company is therefore very important for finding inner peace.

Do Good to Others and Deal Kindly with People

We live in an age where most people don't have time for others, and where violence, crime and selfishness prevail in many locations on our planet. In such an environment it is not easy to be unaffected, as what people around us do has a direct and indirect impact on our lives. In any case, as a Muslim it's important to maintain good manners and to deal with people in a kind way, even those who are hostile towards us. This needs a lot of patience, but God loves those who are patient.

Doing good to others is a high priority to please Allah (SWT). A good deed brings light both to the heart and to the face. Doing good deeds results in being blessed in one's sustenance, and the hearts of people are naturally attracted to the doer of good.

Don't Get Angry



Another important ingredient for inner peace is to be patient with people and to avoid anger and negative reactions and feelings. Anger takes away part of our feeling of peace, and often makes a person act in an irresponsible way. Allah praised in the Quran those who are patient, and those who are able to control themselves and suppress their anger and forgive others. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was a very calm and wise person, and he always advised his companions not to get angry.

If one day you do feel yourself on the verge of exploding in anger, try to make *wudu'* (ablution), or if you are standing sit down and seek refuge from *shaytan* (Satan). When a person gets angry, Satan has a strong impact on him, as anger takes away part of one's good manners and one's sensible way of reasoning. So if you are searching for peace, do your best to be calm and patient

Forgive and Don't be Unjust

Taking patience in dealing with people one step further, do your best to forgive and never be unjust. The path of injustice is a path which takes a person away from the path of God.



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If you are searching for inner peace, forgive and overlook people's mistakes, and don't take revenge for your personal satisfaction.

Be patient and fair, and Allah will love you, bring you closer to Him and increase you in inner peace.

Slow Down and Don't Overload Yourself with Responsibilities

We all have responsibilities in life, and in the modern world of today life gets more complicated each year, with more speed, new and faster technologies, and more stress all the time for most people. In such an environment one needs to find the right balance in order to live a life of peace, and taking on too many responsibilities is often counter-productive.

Try to reduce your daily load till you reach the right balance, and don't be in a hurry, as it's best to do a small number of tasks well than doing too many under stress and without perfection. Remember, this life is a mere transition, and we won't take our wealth with us to the Hereafter, so live a balanced life if you are searching for peace.



Sometimes we go through weeks and months when we are running most of the day, either due to a high work load or too many engagements and matters to attend to, or both. When life gets too busy and you can't find peace, try to slow down a bit. Drive when you are relaxed and not in a hurry as it is very different from driving when you are in a hurry and pressed for time. The same applies to all other life activities: walking to the train with serenity is not like running to catch that last train. All these details accumulate and at the end of the day one ends up either stressed or at peace. So try to slow down if you are searching for peace, it will certainly help.

Take Time Off

Take time off when you need it. After a busy time at work or studies for exams, it's important to take some time off to recharge batteries; both spiritual and physical.

Taking time off gives a chance for reflection and deep thinking, a chance to refresh one's ideas and clear pending matters. Time off also allows for contemplation and being closer to God, the only real source of peace.

Take Life One Day at a Time



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Sometimes we feel like there are so many problems to deal with this week, next month or next year, but we forget that each problem has a solution, and that we don't cross our bridges till we get there.

When feeling stressed due to future problems, it is wise to unwind by taking it one day at a time. Yes, we should plan ahead and do our best, but at the end of the day it is Allah who decides what will eventually happen, so we need to ask Him to guide us to what is best for us in this world and in the Hereafter.

Look at the Positive Side of Life

Being positive most of the time is one of the ways which leads to inner peace. Each event we experience has its positive and negative sides. Sometimes the positives are greater than the negatives, and in some cases it's the other way round. Even when a believer experiences a negative event, he/she is advised to look at its bright or positive side, as only focusing on the negative side leads a person to losing hope.

We must remember that there is always hope, and even if we can't immediately understand the positive side of the



matter we face, it is there, and by thinking and reflecting we can benefit from lessons learned, even after weeks or months, and gain more experience. So be positive and patient if you are searching for peace

Be Content and Satisfied

Even if the external environment is hostile or hard, a content believer would still be happy.

Why?

Because happiness comes from the heart, it comes from the inside. If the external factors are good, this would help increase happiness, but if they are unfavorable if one is content one would still be happy.

If you are searching for real peace and happiness, not temporary pleasures, start by refining your heart and coming closer to God, and when you become content with what God has provided you and the many blessings you have you will find inner peace. An important way to achieve that is to lower expectations regarding worldly matters, and to remember those who have less than you and thank God for His many bounties and blessings.



■ Unplug: Focus on Your Islam

More now than ever in the history of mankind, our world has become like a small village. Our Digital Age makes it possible to get news and information in real time as it unfolds. God Almighty says in the Quran:

{O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.} (Al-Hujurat 49: 13)

Having vast amounts of information at our fingertips is both a blessing and a curse. Sometimes it's necessary to simply unplug. Turn off your smart phone, or other device, and log-off. The time that you would otherwise have spent connected to the Internet can be better utilized elsewhere.



Engage in Voluntary Deeds

As Muslims we are obliged to do certain acts of worship, such as pray the five daily obligatory prayers. There are also a host of deeds that are *nawafil* (voluntary) and left up to our discretion to fulfill. Some of these include performing extra prayers, giving in charity on a regular basis and helping the less fortunate. Performing good deeds is essential in Islam and carries with it a great reward.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"O Allah! I ask You to enable me to perform virtuous deeds and (for) the abandonment of sins."
(Al-Bukhari)

Imagine taking all the time you would normally spend being “plugged” into an electronic device and applying it to the performance of good deeds. The number of good deeds that you could acquire in a month would be staggering to say the least. Instead of texting a friend that you hope he recovers soon from an illness, why not visit him instead and offer your support?



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Instead of expressing your condolences on the death of a friend's family member on Facebook, why not attend the funeral or visit the grieving family?

Once you've released yourself from the shackles of your smart phone, you'll realize that every day is an opportunity to make dozens of good deeds for which the reward will be found in this life or the Hereafter.

Spending Time at the Mosque

The role of the mosque in a Muslim's life simply cannot be ignored. There is a great reward for attaching oneself to the mosque that has been revealed in authentic *hadiths*. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"There are seven whom Allah will shade in His Shade on the Day when there is no shade except His Shade: a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who love each other for Allah's sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position [for illegal intercourse], but he says: 'I fear Allah', a man who



gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a man who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed tears." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

During the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, the mosque was the heart and soul of the Muslim community. It was more than a place of worship. It was a safe haven for Muslims who were destitute, persecuted or simply needed to connect with their fellow brethren in faith.

Mosques today are still used for worship, however many have limited social outreach to the Islamic community. The good news is that you can, *Insha'Allah*, spend time coordinating with the Imam of the mosque to implement new programs and services to reinvigorate the Islamic community. Islamic learning programs, charity drives and the like are just a few of the ways you can encourage other Muslims to spend more time at the mosque and less time plugged into an electronic device.

The Great Unplug

Once you've unplugged yourself, encourage your family members to do the same. And remember it's not necessary



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to abandon your smart phone or other device entirely as there is some benefit to be derived, such as apps that help you learn Arabic or downloadable Islamic e-books. However the amount of time that you, as well as your family members, spend utilizing such devices should be limited so that it does not interfere with your Islam.

Time is very precious, so make the best use of it for your life and for the Hereafter.



Moderation and Recreation: The Perfect Balance

Islam strikes a balance between the demands of the soul and the needs of the body and in observing this balance one will be able to merge the demands of this life with the preparation for the Hereafter.

Blessed by Islam, we are presented a balanced formula of rights and duties, in which we are neither spoiled by too many rights nor strained by too many duties and obligations. After all, as previously mentioned, moderation is the key concept of Islamic morality.

Enjoying Recreation and Humor

We, as humans, are created requiring rest, recreation and humor. This is something completely natural. Taking time for yourself through recreation is not an indulgence but rather a necessity and a great way to deal with the many stresses and constant worries life throws at us, so there is no reason to remain the wrongly stereotyped serious Muslim 24/7.



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After all, Muslims can have fun. Remember without this recreation and humor we cannot be productive in life. There are many instances in Islam where Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), used humor to lighten the mood in many situations; he was known to always smile. In fact when he laughed it was said the whites of his teeth showed. Abdullah ibn Al-Harith relays: "I have never seen a man who smiled as much as the Messenger of God."

There are also many stories relaying the Prophet and his humor. Recalling one incident is when the Prophet was with Ali ibn Abi Talib and they were eating 12 dates together. As they were about to finish, Ali saw some people approaching. He quickly moved the pile of 6 pits that he had to the Prophet's pile and jokingly told the passersby that the Prophet had kept all the dates to himself and didn't share! The Prophet in good spirits said right back, look at Ali, he eats the dates and he eats the pits as well! (because he didn't have any pits on his side).

The prophet did not limit his recreations and jokes with only his friends, as his wife Aisha narrates the following about her husband:



"I swear by God that I saw the Messenger standing at the door of my room while the Abyssinians were engaged in spear play in the mosque, where he screened me with his cloak so I could watch them perform. He stood there for my sake until I decided that I had had enough." (Al-Bukhari)

Addressing all aspects of our lives, Islam is complete and comprehensive; it covers all of our needs, including our need for diversions and for recreation. It also provides for us lawful means to fulfill this need.

The Companion Abu al-Darda' said:

"I seek recreation in something that is neither useful nor unlawful, and this makes me stronger on the truth."

There are numerous stories where the Prophet's companions participated in many different forms of lawful entertainment and play. They engaged in sports like footraces, horse racing, wrestling, and archery. Moreover they spent time in telling jokes and in lighthearted conversation.



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The scholars of Islam have attested to the importance of lawful recreation to the healthy development of a person's character.

Enjoying recreation and taking care of yourself by taking a break ensures you have the energy to return to whatever other roles you play, whether as a parent or a professional, or whatever your responsibilities in life generally are, in turn, making us better Muslims in our transition from this world to the Hereafter.

Living Moderate

Since time is precious, we must always be acutely aware of how valuable the time is that we have been given in our brief lives on Earth. We are taught to place a premium on our time and to get as much out of it as we can, defining for us the various ways we can employ it, thus creating the balance outlined earlier. Prophet Muhammad said:

"Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately. Always adopt middle, moderate, regular course, whereby you will reach your target of Paradise." (Al-Bukhari)



Salman Al-Farisi has been reported to have said to Abu Al-Darda':

"Your own self has a right over you, your Lord has a right over you, your guest has a right over you, and your family has a right over you. So give everyone his due." When the Prophet heard about what Salman had said, he approved of it, saying: "Salman has spoken the truth. (Al-Bukhari)

In one occasion, the Prophet once asked a companion: Is it true that you fast all day and stand in prayer all night? The companion replied that the report was indeed true.

The Prophet then said:

"Do not do that! Observe the fast sometimes and also leave it at other times. Stand up for prayer at night and also sleep at night. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you and your wife has a right over you." (Al-Bukhari)

This indicates the importance of moderation which is the true scale for Islam, and it is significant that converts/reverts understand this.



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Muslims can and do have fun. They love to smile just as much as the next person and they enjoy recreational activities to the max. Islam stresses the consequence of striving to reap benefits for both this world and the next. The life of this world is the harvesting ground for the Hereafter. It is but a passing phase and the life to come is the eternal abode.

A Muslim, therefore, should expend his efforts for the sake of the Hereafter and at the same time bring about benefits in this world. We can reach our full potential only after we have taken care of ourselves and taken advantage of the right to take a break, use humor and engage in activities close to the heart.

In light of all this, we can ascertain that while recreation and entertainment are necessary to lead balanced lives, we should not however allow it to take up too much of our time. Nor should we engage in it to the point where it ceases to be beneficial. Furthermore we should not let it become our habit to perpetually seek recreation and diversion, and lastly our means of recreation and our entertainments must be completely free from anything that is unlawful in Islam.



A large crowd of people, mostly men wearing prayer caps, are seen from behind, prostrating in prayer on a dark surface. They are facing a large, ornate mosque with a prominent dome and arched windows, illuminated by warm lights at night. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the scale of the gathering.

CHAPTER TWO

How to Get Closer to God

- *Bonding with the Creator*
- *God's Tests to Strengthen our Faith*
- *Developing Links with God*
- *Seeking Sincere Forgiveness*
- *A Believer's Good Deeds*
- *Turning Good Deeds into Lifelong Habits*
- *God Answers Everyone's Prayers*
- *Prayer: A Special Connection With God*



■ Bonding with the Creator

We are pretty much aware of what “remembering God” entails - it’s about daily prayers, regular reading Quran, fasting, enjoining good and other obligations.



But what is important is growing in this relationship. And to grow in this relationship such that God comes rushing to us as mentioned in a Hadith Qudsi, there are two things that need to be taken care of: consistency in worship, and leaving all that can turn us away from God’s remembrance. It’s a continuous climb. And for a new Muslim, it is undoubtedly a great struggle.

Abu Hurairah reported Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as saying that God states:



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"I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about Me, and I am with him as he remembers Me.

And if he remembers Me in his heart, I also remember him in My Heart, and if he remembers Me in assembly I remember him in assembly better than his, and if he draws near Me by the span of a palm, I draw near him by the cubit, and if he draws near Me by the cubit I draw near him by the space (covered by) two hands.

And if he walks towards Me, I rush towards him."
(Muslim)

It's simple to comprehend how things work with God - unlike the people around us with whom it is exhausting to keep things stable. You have to pussy-foot around their sensitivities, remember their big days, keep track of their likes and dislikes, be wary of their mood swings and in some cases with particularly complicated mortals- you have to read between the lines to understand them better. And even then you do not know where you stand with them. It's just complicated, don't you think so?



On the other end, we are in this remarkable relationship with our Creator where nothing is “complicated” because we do not have to “figure” anything out nor bear the brunt of moodiness.

In fact, God Himself has declared in the above *hadith* how we are supposed to hold our end of the rope. Yet, time and time again, we erroneously apply human psychology to our ties with God. When we wrong ourselves, we further plunge into our miseries sentencing ourselves to doom - guilty as charged. We feel that we have “lost face” and somehow repenting would be like hitting a nerve somewhere and that we stand no chances of forgiveness anyway. And hence, we attribute Him, who is *Ar-Rahman* and *Al-Haleem*, towards our own incapability of profound forbearance.



■ God's Tests to Strengthen our Faith

One thing that echoes in my mind are the words of one of the sisters before she broke off contact; she said that she thought by saying her *Shahadah* that her life would get easier and the difficulties that she was facing would reduce. And maybe others had some of the same thoughts.

Many of us have felt that after we became Muslims that the tests got harder. Maybe it was Satan trying to pull us back, maybe it was God testing us to give us chance to strengthen our faith and realize that we need to turn to Him or maybe it was because we were having to learn a new way to react to life's challenges by working out how to respond to them in a way that would please God, rather than our own desires.

So what tools can we use to develop hope in the future?



■ Developing Links with God

The main tool is to develop a closer relationship with God; to learn more about Him, develop and strengthen links with Him and turn to Him for support and guidance. This can be done through reading the Quran and reading good books about *Aqeedah* (the Creed). It can be done through listening to talks, attending Friday Prayers, and being in touch with people who will remind us of God and help us to get closer to Him.

But the main way to get closer to God is to develop a personal relationship with Him through *Du'a* and following His guidance.



■ Seeking Sincere Forgiveness

For reverts who are finding the tests difficult, try to hold onto your faith and be patient for a while longer. God promises that He will test us, but He also says that He does so because He wants us to turn to Him:

{And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.} (Al-Baqarah 2: 155-56)

Islam gives us the tools to get through difficulties and hardships. It promises us that God is Merciful and wants the best for us. All we have to do is believe in this and we can get through anything and this gives us the hope that tomorrow will be a better day.

And if the challenges still seem to continue, perhaps we need to turn to God more, perhaps we need to have a little more faith in the fact that He will answer our supplications when it is the right time and that He knows best when that time will be. It's not always easy when you're going



through challenges to be able to see the big picture, just have faith that the one who can see it knows what is going on and He wants what's best for you.

When you come out the other side, you'll be able to look back and see it too and with the knowledge that the best is yet to come, *insha'Allah*, either in this world or in the Hereafter. Just hold onto your faith and the rewards will come to you.



A Believer's Good Deeds

God reminds us that though some good deeds may seem minute or mundane as compared to achievements of other people, the weight of the deed falls under His judgement as only God will eventually bestow rewards or punishments upon a certain person.

{Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth—except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)? Those who did wrong gladly pursued the life of luxury that they were given and were evildoers.} (Hud 11: 116).



■ **Turning Good Deeds into Lifelong Habits**

Without doubt, Prophet Muhammad left a telling reminder of the importance of good deeds just before his departure, providing a huge incentive for Muslims to constantly engage in good deeds and ward off bad behaviour.

But as human as believers are, grappling with temptation and fluctuation levels of faith is a daily battle for many. At the same time however, the highest abode of Heaven as a promise for those who engage in the best deeds is a temptation like no other, and its rewards are not superficial or temporary, and definitely know no contest as far as returns are concerned.

The secret in turning good deeds into lifelong habits is achieving a strong relationship with God and asking for His help when engaging in good deeds. God in turn opens doors to many opportunities to further excel as a Muslim, and a believer must remember that, so the benefits of deeds do spill over into the Hereafter.



Chapter 2

How to Get Closer to God

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Of all the forms of ritual worship in Islam, prayer (in Arabic, *salah*) is unique. It is typical of Islam and is entirely different from the usual kind of prayer familiar in other religions.

The prostration in prayer symbolizes the worshipper's total and unconditional submission to God Almighty. Of course certain supplications are recited in prayer, following the Prophetic teaching.

But the objective of prayer is not this worldly life. Muslims can pray to God for the solution of the immediate problems they confront any time, in any language. But they are not authorized to change the language of the utterances in prayer, nor can they change its form or content. Muslims have to strictly adhere to its form as taught by Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims believe that God has made prayer compulsory for all His prophets as well as their followers, as it is evident from the Quran. To Moses, God said what means,



{Verily I am Allah: There is no god but Me: so worship Me only and establish regular prayer for My remembrance.} (Ta-Ha 20: 13-14)

The important aspect of a believer's faith is his or her relationship with God; and nowhere is this relationship exemplified as in prayer. Prayer lifts a person spiritually towards his or her Creator and if it is done with devotion and sincerity, his or her heart will be filled with the love of God and the hope of Paradise.

Praying five times a day helps Muslims to constantly remember God and seek His forgiveness and pleasure. Besides, it offers an occasion for repentance, so that they earnestly ask Allah for forgiveness of the sins they committed. Prophet Muhammad said,

"Imagine a stream outside a person's door and imagine that he bathes in it five times a day; do you think he would have any dirt on him?" The people said, "Not at all." The Prophet then said, "The five daily prayers are like that: Allah wipes away the sins by them." (Al-Bukhari)



■ God Answers Everyone's Prayers

The most important aspect of a person's relationship with God is his or her strong faith and sincerity. This relationship with God is clearly borne out and strengthened by prayer. If the prayer is performed with true devotion to God and with a sincere heart, it will have a lasting effect on the person.

God has infinite might and knowledge. He is the Possessor of everything in the entire universe. Every being, every object, from the seemingly most powerful people to the greatest riches, from the magnificent celestial bodies to a tiny animal dwelling on the Earth, all belongs to God and are all under His complete will and control.

A person who has faith in this truth can pray to God for anything and can hope that God will answer those prayers. For example, a person who is seized by an incurable disease will surely resort to all forms of medical care. Yet, knowing that only God restores health, prayers will be offered to Him for recovery.



Alternatively, a person with some kind of fear or anxiety can pray to God for relief and to remove all forms of fear. A person who encounters difficulties in accomplishing a task can turn to God for the removal of difficulties. One can pray to God for countless things; for guidance to the true path, for acceptance into paradise with other true believers, for a better grasp of Paradise, Hell and the might of God, for good health and so on. This is what God's Messenger (peace be upon him) stressed when he said:

"Shall I introduce to you a weapon which will protect you both from the evils of enemies and increase your sustenance? They said: Yes, O Messenger of God. He said: Call your Lord day and night, for 'Prayer' is the weapon of a believer." (Al-Mundhiri)



■ Prayer: A Special Connection with God

In Islam, the term "worship" (in Arabic, *ibadah*) does not signify merely the "pillars of Islam" such as prayer, fasting, charity or pilgrimage. It includes all the activities of a believer; in fact, it stands for everything a Muslim believes, says, or does. When believers perform all the activities of their lives seeking the pleasure of God, then all their deeds become worship. Naturally, this also includes the rituals they perform, such as prayer.

We can see that the worship of God as visualized in Islam - whether it is ritual or non-ritual - prevents evil thoughts and actions, thereby purifying life. Indeed, sincere Islamic worship trains the individual to lead a life of complete obedience and submission to God.

Certainly a person's God-consciousness awakened by prayer strengthens him or her against temptations arising from the weakness of the flesh.



Thus it is prayer that enables believers to keep in constant touch with their Creator and to keep steady in the face of the temptations and the pressures of life.





CHAPTER THREE

Faith, Manners & Heart Matters

- *Self Development & the Impact of Faith on Inner Peace*
- *Keeping Ties with God and Trusting Him*
- *Put Your Trust in God*



■ Self-Development & the Impact of Faith on Inner Peace

Faith has a positive impact on inner peace.

A Muslim increases in peace through self-development by strengthening faith through the following means:



Sincere Intentions

The key for any good deed in Islam is having a pure intention, and being sincere for the sake of Allah. Sincerity in dealing with other people is very important, but it is even more important in a believer's relation with God. Sincerity of intention is the basis of how our actions will be judged by Allah, as only God knows our true intentions.



God only accepts sincere actions which are purely for His sake, and these are the ones which bring us closer to Him and increase us in inner peace. Anything we do or say to show-off, (like showing-off knowledge, generosity, prayers, piety, ... etc), will be rejected on the Day of Judgment, and won't bring real benefit, neither to our level of faith, nor to our feeling of peace.

As no one is perfect, we can all make an effort to improve and refine our intentions, and get rid of any hypocrisy we may have in our hearts, in order to increase in faith and come closer to Allah. Remember that God sees each thing we do and hears each word we say and knows what is in our hearts, so don't even try to mix good intentions with bad ones, if you are searching for peace. Only sincere deeds will be accepted.

Seek Knowledge

Seeking knowledge is a high priority in Islam, for a number of reasons.

On one hand it helps a Muslim understand the divine Guidance God has revealed for us to live a happy life here and in the hereafter. Getting to know Allah makes a



believer come closer to Him, and this increases faith and inner peace.

On the other hand, knowledge helps us deal with doubts which Satan, man's worst enemy, tries to whisper to believers in order to make them deviate from the Straight Path of Allah. Satan has two main avenues to deviate the sons of Adam, either through doubts or through unlawful desires. By gaining knowledge, a Muslim can clear all doubts and refute all suspicious matters he may come across, thereby reaching the peace of mind and gaining a stronger faith.

But seeking knowledge also has other important benefits, as Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

"When a group of people assemble for the remembrance of Allah, the angels surround them (with their wings), (Allah's) mercy envelops them, *sakinah*, or tranquility descends upon them and Allah makes a mention of them before those who are near Him." (Sahih Muslim)

When angels descend and surround people with their wings, a deep feeling of peace fills the hearts of believers, a



feeling which is difficult to describe and can only be experienced. This tranquility makes one feel inner peace and contentment, and somehow all worries disappear. This feeling may not last for long, as once one is out of the mosque and on the street we have to face real life again with all its problems, but going to the mosque on a regular basis and attending gatherings where the Quran is recited and Allah's name is mentioned helps one charge the spiritual batteries, and increase in peace.

Remember Allah

In order for the feeling of peace and tranquility to continue after leaving the mosque, a believer continues remembering Allah throughout the day and the rest of the week, by reading the Quran, praying at night when other people are asleep, and praising Allah especially before sunrise and before sunset.

A strong faith leads a believer to love Allah, his Creator, and when he loves Allah he remembers Him all, or most, of the time, when free and also when busy, when working and when resting, at all times of the day and night. And this continuous remembrance brings peace to the heart, as Allah describes it in the Quran:



{... with the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace} (Ar-Ra'd, 13:28)

Remember the Hereafter

Nobody lives forever, and remembering that this life is a transition, like a bridge we walk over to go from one side of the river to the other, is an important wake-up call when one is too occupied with worldly matters.

This is an important reminder that helps self-development, as remembering the Hereafter is one of the six articles of faith. This world is a transition, so don't be fooled by its glitter, and don't be attached to its material aspects. Wealth, fame, power, beauty, cars, houses, ... etc. are the glitter of this world. A wise believer deals with those worldly matters with caution, making sure to be in control of them, and not allowing them to take over one's life.

If the love of these worldly matters takes control of your heart, you will not have room left for the love of God. Money comes and goes, power comes and goes, so do all of the rest of these worldly matters. What really counts is faith and being close to God which leads to peace of mind, contentment and inner peace.



Remember also that all your deeds are recorded, so have *taqwa* (piety), and know that you will be held accountable for them on the Day of Judgment.

{So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.} (Az-Zalzalah, 99:7-8)

It is part of human nature to forget that we are on a journey to the Hereafter, but when we remember we come closer to God, and this reminder helps us regain the right balance and follow His Guidance.

Be Patient

The past can't be changed, no one knows the future, the length of your life and sustenance has already been decided, so submit to the will of God. Life has its ups and downs so be patient.

Patience is an important virtue which God loves, and is mentioned in the Quran in many verses. When faced with hardships, a believer should be patient and have faith in that all what happens in this life is by Allah's decree. Belief in *qadar* (measured destiny) is one of the important six



articles of faith, and has a strong impact on how a believer acts in life, as Allah (SWT) said:

{Say, "Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon Allah let the believers rely.} (At-Tawbah, 9:51)

With this knowledge and certitude, a Muslim is patient and content with what Allah has decreed, knowing that after hardships come times of ease, as Allah promised in the Quran:

{For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.} (Ash-Sharh, 94:5-6)

So if you go through a difficult time, like illness for example, remember that on the other side of the hardship itself there is an opportunity to strengthen your faith and to come closer to God, which leads to a higher level of inner peace.

Avoid Sins & When you Sin Repent Immediately



No one is sinless, and all people make mistakes, some are intentional sins and others not intentional. God loves those who repent when they sin.

A quick return to God's Path after sinning is very important, as delaying repentance makes it more difficult, as illustrated by this example:

When you finish a meal, if you immediately rinse the plates, they will be much easier to wash compared to say leaving them till the following day. Same here, repenting straight after a sin makes the return to God's Path much faster and much easier, and this makes the level of faith and closeness to God remain reasonably stable, which leads a believer not to lose his/her level of inner peace. Following a sin with a good deed for the sake of Allah helps erase it, as advised by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Control Wealth and Don't Let it Control You

A believer finds inner peace from within, i.e. from the tranquility of his/her soul, not from external factors



A believer has faith that God is The Provider (*Al-Razzak*). He provides for all His creatures, and our provision (*rizk*) is part of our destiny which is determined before we were born.

What a believer is required to do is do his/her best effort to earn a lawful living, and part of a strong faith is to be certain that we will not earn more than what is written for us, and that at the same time nobody can take away what Allah has granted.

Based on this certitude, a believer controls wealth and does not let it control his life. Wealth and its love should therefore never be inside the heart, only in our hands (i.e. in our control). If it increases, we should not rejoice and if it decreases we should not be sad.

Accepting destiny (after doing one's best) is an important factor for finding inner peace and tranquility, so don't panic if your wealth decreases, and ask Allah for all your needs, He will answer you.



Be Thankful

Satisfaction is achieved when one is pleased with what Allah has ordained. When one distances himself from wanting what people have, and submits to the will of Allah, one will achieve pure satisfaction. Remember this hadith:

"Whoever spends his night safely in his home, with a healthy body and enough provision for his day, it is as if he has gained the world in its entirety" (At-Tirmidhi)

Every time I read or listen to this hadith and think of its words for a few moments, a feeling of peace enters the heart. There are many people around the world who are deprived of shelter, food, security and health, and we should be thankful for the many blessings we have.

What else does one really need from this world other than these three basics: security, health and provision? Thinking of what may or may not happen next year, or even next month, and worrying about it is not a wise position for a believer to take. Why?



First of all we don't know for sure whether we will be around next year. So why worry about something which may not be valid?

Second: A believer knows that God is The Provider. He will provide next year (if we are still here) as He has provided this year. Provision may be more or may be less, but at the end we trust that God will provide.

Third: As for good health, that is something beyond us. We thank God for the health He has bestowed on us, we do our best to preserve it by following a healthy lifestyle, and we ask Him to cure us if we are not well. After a certain age however, we know that it is normal for our general health condition to gradually decline till we reach old age. That is life: all creatures start young, mature then get old. We can't reverse the clock and we accept it as part of our journey in this life. So the best approach is to take this phase in life wisely without complaint, if we want to be content.

Being content is an important key for inner peace, and we should thank God for what we have.



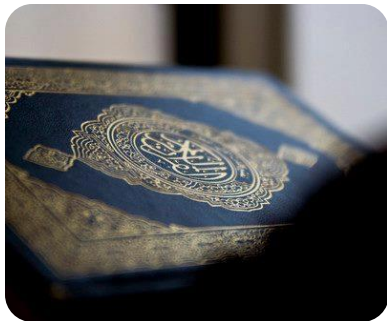
Do Your Best to be Among Those Whom Allah Loves

In order to find true happiness and inner peace, be one of those God loves, whom He mentioned in the Quran.

God loves those who are patient, those who are just, those who trust in Him and those who do good and those who seek perfection in their deeds. He also loves those who purify themselves, and those who repent to Him and have *taqwa* (piety) in their hearts.

By doing one's best to acquire these qualities, a believer comes closer to God through the door of love, and this is the highest level of inner peace.

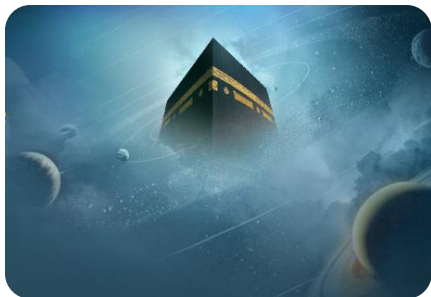
Some Muslim scholars describe this stage as Paradise on earth.





■ Put Your Trust in God

Nothing on earth should make you give up. See how the Prophet behaved when he was in the cave and the people of Quraish were following him. His friend Abu Bakr reported that:



"I was in the company of the Prophet in the cave, and on seeing the traces of the pagans, I said, "O Allah's messenger if one of them (pagans) should lift up his foot, he will see us." He said, "What do you think of two, the third of whom is Allah?" (Al-Bukhari)

Put your trust in God and be sure that He is always there to help you.

Although the people of Quraish were hostile towards the Prophet and wanted to put an end to his life and message, they used to call him the truthful and the trustworthy.



They used also to entrust him with their valuables. What a contradiction!



■ **Keeping Ties with God and Trusting Him**

Life is a journey down smooth paths, rocky roads and extremely treacherous terrain.

While joy comes naturally during the easy times of life, it takes effort to find moments of happiness during adversity.

It's easy to get caught up in our own stress and anxiety, and I for one plead guilty of this, however, I try to remember that our life is short and temporary, and that the everlasting life is in the Hereafter. This will to some extent help put our worries in perspective.

Losing a valuable family member recently, I have been jolted to recognize our belief in the transitory nature of the life of this world remembering that whatever difficulties, trials, anxieties, and grief we suffer in this world are something we will only experience for a short period of



time. More importantly, if we remember to handle these tests with patience, God will reward us for it.

By remembering God in the way He has taught us to, we are more likely to gain acceptance of our prayers and His Mercy in times of difficulty. When our heart feels heavy with stress, worry or grief we must communicate with the only one who not only hears and knows all, but who can also change our situation and give us the patience to deal with our difficulties.

The Quran reads:

{Remember Me, and I shall remember you; be grateful to Me, and deny Me not.} (Al-Baqarah [2: 152](#))

And

{If you are grateful, I will give you more.} (Ibrahim [14: 7](#))

As believers, we must be aware of the fact that the trials we encounter are there so that God can develop and strengthen our character. They remind us of our



limitations as human beings and our complete need of God and His guidance.

At times we may feel our faith wavering through difficult phases in life. It's hard to still believe that we can look forward to God's blessings when we feel everything tumbling around us. Keeping faith in God and strengthening ties during these times is imperative even when it means taking the first step when you don't see the whole staircase.

God says in a sacred *hadith*:

“Whoever comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.” (Al-Bukhari)

We should try to live in the moment. Without doubt there are moments of joy in even the most painful times of life and we should make every effort to look for them. We must open our heart to these moments, rest in them and ultimately turn to God.

It is impossible for us to turn to God, and He rejects us. We are replete with *hadiths* which demonstrate this. One such *hadith* reads:



“Allah is happier when a servant of His repents to Him than a man who was on his camel in a waterless desert and the camel escaped from him with his food and water. When he has lost hope of finding it, he retired to a tree and lied down under its shade. As he was there, the camel suddenly appeared in front of him. He took hold of its halter and said in his state of excessive joy: ‘O my Lord You are my servant and I am Your Lord.’ He uttered this erroneous statement as a result of his being overjoyed.” (Muslim)

Counting our blessings not only helps us to be grateful for what we have, but also reminds us that we are so much better off than many others, whether that is in terms of our health, family, financial situation, or other aspects of our life. Being grateful for all we have helps us maintain a positive attitude in the face of worries and challenges we are facing almost daily. Taking the time out to thank God for His blessings will not only overwhelm us because we will never be able to enumerate them, but will truly help us recognize God's undeniable presence in our life.

God says:



{And remember when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in favor.} (Ibrahim [14: 7](#))

Do You Trust God?

Now that we have acknowledged the significance of turning to God and remembering Him during difficult times we must also grasp how reliance or *tawakul* on God is just as important.

With the blessed months of Sha’ban and Ramadan we are living, what better time to strengthen our resolve to leaving things to God and putting our faith in that He knows what's best for us even if at the time they seem incomprehensible. The Divine works in ways too sophisticated for our minds, just reading chapter Al-Kahf with Moses (peace be upon him) and Al-Khidr reveals many instances of our limitations.

Developing and maintaining this reliance and ties with God requires time, effort and the desire for closeness. Just as relationships with other people take work and devotion, so does a relationship with God. Putting forth that effort often leads to a greater sense of self-worth, inner peace,



compassion and love. Choosing to pursue this relationship and keep it strong is something we must all work on to improve ourselves and our outlook on life.

In light of this, we should definitely take time to develop our relationship with God and reap the rewards and the peace it brings. By thanking Him we also recognize and appreciate Him. The more we thank, the more we will see how He has blessed us, and again realize His presence in our life. This in itself will truly create a certain soothing of the heart. Prophet Muhammad said:

“Remember Allah during times of ease and He will remember you during times of difficulty.” (At-Tirmidhi)

God says in the beautiful *hadith*:

“O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind.

O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you.



O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.” (Ahmad)

As mentioned above, the blessed months we are living leading up to Ramadan is a perfect chance for us to reevaluate, strengthen and develop our relationship with God. By depending on and trusting God fully you will realize how much simpler life can be.

This can be realized when reading:

{And He will provide him from sources he could never imagine. And whoever puts their trust in Allah, and then He will suffice him. Verily, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Indeed, Allah has set a measure for all things.} (At-Talaq [65: 3](#))

And:

{He is the Most Gracious Allah in Him we believe, and in Him we put our trust. So, you will come to know who it is that is in manifest error.} (Al-Mulk [67: 29](#))



While knowing that our responsibility for what happens is limited and comforting instilling in us an enormous amount of peace and contentment, we must understand that our success depends on our sincere efforts to the best of our abilities. Take for instance the popular *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said to the Bedouin who had left his camel without tying it, to tie your camel and place your trust in God.

By 'tying the camel' we have done the best that can be done as humans, what happens after that is up to God for He knows best. We have utilized all our means without simply waiting for a miracle to as they say 'drop from the sky'.

Our reliance though shouldn't be mistaken with giving up our efforts thinking that somehow our challenges will get resolved. It means however striving and working with the attitude that God will take care of our affairs and will help us in getting through our trials remembering all the time that this too shall pass. This full conviction will be reached when we work on building a solid relation with God while leaving the overall results to Him.



What we all want from life is continuous and genuine happiness and while it seems impossible, it can be reached simply by acknowledging and trusting that God is All-Knowing, He is our sustainer.

We must make God a priority in our life. To help improve our bond with God we should surround ourselves with good positive friends who will pray for us, encourage us and share with us their testimony and how they have made it through the bad times in their life by putting trust in and *tawakul* or reliance on God in turn strengthening our faith and renewing the right spirit within us.



CHAPTER FOUR

Finding & Keeping Inner Peace

- *Keep a Strong Relation with God*
- *Ways for New Muslims to Find Inner Peace*
- *Accept Destiny to Find Inner Peace*



■ **Keep a Strong Relation with God**

One of the beauties of Islam is that Muslims have a direct relationship with their Creator.

There are no intermediaries between a Muslim and God, and in order to grow in faith and peace, believers need to strengthen their relation with Him.

The following are some important issues that help strengthen our personal relation with Allah.

Reflect on the Universe and Be Humble

One look at the night sky, with the billions of stars out there, those we see and those we can't see, is an important reminder of Allah's Majesty and Might, and that compared to this amazing universe which surrounds us we are so small and insignificant in size, knowledge and power. This thought is an important reminder as it should lead our hearts to be humble, which is the right way to communicate with our Creator, always remembering how



insignificant we are, and that it is we who need Him, not the other way round.

Allah loves humble believers, and dislikes those who are arrogant, and this is a good foundation for a believer's personal relation which God, and an important reminder to always keep in mind. So look at the sky and look at the stars if you forget, and remember your place in God's immense and amazing universe ... The only logical outcome one can reach by doing so would be to praise Allah, and as one enjoys the beauty of the sky, whether by normal eye-sight, a telescope or using Google Sky, a feeling of peace will fill the heart of a believer, together with an increase of humbleness and love for our Creator ... Subhan Allah

Be Sincere and Keep Your Promise

Allah only accepts deeds that are based on sincere intentions purely for His sake. So before starting anything new, or even saying any word, we need to check our intentions, and maintain a sincere relation with Him. If you promise God to do something, keep your promise, and remember that He knows what you think and what you intend to do. An interesting story which illustrates the



sincerity, trust and truthfulness of believers happened in the time of the Israelites, which is detailed in Sahih Al-Bukhari:

"A man from the children of Israel asked another man to lend him 1,000 dinars, and he answered, "Bring witnesses that I will make bear witness (to this transaction)."

The first man said, "Allah is enough as a witness."

He then said, "Then bring me a guarantor."

He said, "Allah is enough as a Guarantor."

The man said, "You have spoken the truth."

He gave him the money for a fixed term. The debtor traveled by sea and when he fulfilled the purpose of his journey, he looked for a ship to board and to return and pay the debt at the appointed time. However, he was not able to find a ship, so he took a piece of wood, pierced it, and thrust into it 1,000 dinars along with a letter to the creditor. Then he took it to the ocean.



He said, "Oh Allah! You know that I borrowed 1,000 dinars from such and such person, and he asked me for a guarantor. I said, Allah is enough as a guarantor. He was pleased with You, and he also asked for a witness. I said, Allah is enough as a witness and he was pleased with You as a witness. And I have not been able to find a ship to send him that which is due to him, so indeed I trust it to You."

He threw the piece of wood into the ocean until it was swallowed by water, and then went away. He then continued to search for a boat to return to his country. The creditor went out looking - perhaps a boat would come with his wealth. He found a piece of wood - in which was the money - and he took it to his family as firewood. When he broke the wood open, he found the money and the letter.

Then the debtor returned, bringing with him (another) 1,000 dinars. He said, "By Allah, I continued to search for a boat in order to return your wealth to you, but I did not find one until I found the one that I came on now."



The other man asked, "And did you send anything to me?" ..."For indeed, Allah paid for you through the wood that you sent.""

This amazing story shows how a strong faith, together with sincerity, honesty and the will to keep a promise made with God as a witness, brings a believer close to God. Allah describes righteous believers in the Quran as follows:

{They [are those who] fulfill [their] vows ...} (Al-Insan, 76:7)

Knowing that and reaching this level of faith and sincerity, should any believer really worry about the future?

Communicate with Allah

The man in debt in this story communicated with Allah through prayer (*du'aa*) and doing his best to keep his promise, he put his trust in Allah asking Him to deliver the piece of wood which had the money. To find inner peace, we need to communicate with Allah on a regular basis, as He is the source of all peace. Such communication can



either be through *du'aa*, through reading the Quran or through praying (*Salah*).

If you want God to speak to you, read The Quran, and if you want to speak to God pray. The important thing is to always have these channels of communication open and in good condition. Reading the Quran will surely bring peace to the heart, and so will praying. It is also very important to remember Allah at times of ease so that He remembers you at times of hardship, as mentioned in a hadith by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him:

"Remember Allah in times of ease, and He will recognize you in times of distress." (Musnad Ahmed)

The quality of communicating with Allah is as important as quantity, so when you switch off your mobile phone before starting to pray, also do your best to switch off from your personal problems, worries and concerns before reading the Quran or starting to pray, as this way you will concentrate more and will reap the fruit of communicating with your Creator through increased knowledge and inner peace.



Visit Allah

When you love a person, you want to visit them and be near them. It's the same in our relation with Allah.

If you really love Him, then visit Him on a regular basis. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, informed us that the *masajid* (mosques), are the best locations on earth, so do your best to visit Him in His house not only on Fridays, but beyond that on a more regular basis. Men are encouraged to pray the five daily prayers in the *masjid*, if they have one nearby, and women are encouraged to go to the *masjid* as often as they can. The more you visit Him, the more He will reward you and fill your heart with peace. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

"He who performs ablution in his home and perfects it, then comes to the mosque, he is Allah's visitor, and it is incumbent upon the host to be generous towards his guest" (Hadith in Al-Tabarani, authenticated by Al-Albani)

Another way to visit Allah is to go on Hajj and Umrah. Visiting Makkah on pilgrimage is an amazing journey which has multiple benefits, one of them being renewing



and strengthening our relation with God, and cleaning our hearts from worldly attachments and desires.

While in Makkah, a Muslim remembers Prophet Abraham, peace be upon him, and his wife Hagar, and the many lessons learned from their legacy in that blessed location. We remember Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his companions and their followers, and the many sacrifices they made fourteen centuries ago in order for this religion to reach us today. With so many angels filling the place, inner peace and tranquility are strongly felt all over Makkah and Madinah.

Balance Between Hope Fear & Love

A bird can't fly with one wing, it needs two wings, and also it needs a head. In order to achieve a balance in life, a believer needs to maintain a balance between hope and fear, and have the love of Allah as his guide to God's Path, following the Sunnah of our beloved Prophet, Muhammad peace be upon him. Allah (SWT) says in the Quran:

{Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and



forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} (3:31)

Too much hope in the heart of a believer may lead to committing sins relying on the assumption that God is Merciful and that He forgives all sins. On the other hand, having too much fear from the Hereafter would make life very complicated, as a believer would always opt for ideal options, which are often impossible to achieve in this world.

Somewhere in the middle of the scale between fear and hope is the right position to take, and scholars recommend that while a believer is young and in good health, he should be more motivated by fear than hope, but later on in life, when one is near death, one should have more hope, looking forward to meeting Allah, The Most Merciful. This equilibrium leads to a balanced life, and to a believer's heart thereby being at peace.

Try to Reach the Level of *Ihsan*

In the well-known hadith where Angel Gabriel came to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and asked him



about Islam, Faith (*Iman*), and Perfection (*Ihsan*), the Prophet defined the third topic of *Ihsan* as follows:

“It means that you should worship Allah (SWT) as though you see Him, for He sees you though you do not see Him.” (Sahih Muslim)

When a believer becomes very conscious of Allah's presence and feels that He is watching every move one makes, this level is close to the highest level of piety when one becomes close to an ideal Muslim in faith, manners and dealing with people. At this stage, the heart will certainly overflow with inner peace and tranquility, for Allah loves those who perfect their deeds and do good (*Al-Muhsineen*), those who have reached the level of *Ihsan*.



■ Ways for New Muslims to Find Inner Peace

Most reverts to Islam can pinpoint the exact moment when they began to question their previous religion or began inquiring about its veracity.

For many, the journey to Islam began with a thirst for knowledge and a quest to understand the purpose of human existence.

Quite notably, many reverts turn to Islam as a means of salvation from the chaos and uncertainty that often exists in other world religions.

Falsehood does not promote tranquility or peace. However, adherence to the religion of Islam does induce a great sense of peace and satisfaction that is soothing to the body and mind. Achieving inner peace, while in a state of Islam, can have enormous effects on our faith and our quality of life.

There are several ways to achieve inner peace.



Understanding “Peace”

By definition the word “peace” means, “Freedom from disturbance; quiet and tranquility.”

However, the word means different things to different people.

For some, acquiring massive amounts of wealth and indulging in a luxurious lifestyle is the epitome of peace. For others, the ability to dominate others and impose their ideals upon them is the essence of peace.

To Muslims, however, peace is something that is achieved by reconciling our human needs with the world around us while under the shade of Islam. It can be a very fine juggling act for new reverts, who are just gaining a foothold with their new religion.

Removing Obstacles

Within all human beings there exist obstacles that thwart our efforts to achieve inner peace. Some of them include anger, jealousy, greed and the like. All of these obstacles can be changed by our choices or behavior. For example,



someone who is consistently angry can seek counseling or learn techniques to control their anger. The key for reverts is to recognize obstacles and look for ways to alleviate them.

There also exist obstacles that cannot be changed. For example, a child born under the Israeli occupation in Palestine is born into a series of obstacles that will affect every aspect of life well before he has taken that first breath. As God Almighty says in the Quran:

{...it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.}
(Al-Baqarah 2: 216)

There are limits to which obstacles we can remove and which ones are permanent fixtures of our lives. When understanding the latter, these types of obstacles are best viewed as trials and tribulations that are tests from God Almighty. The best way to cope with them is to have patience and trust in God's Decree. By doing so, you can achieve inner peace.



Find Your Purpose

Perhaps your parents invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in your education and now you've become a highly respected individual in your field. You must, however, ask yourself: "Is this your true purpose?"

Countless people around the world work in professions that hold no meaning for them. They simply go through the motions, day in and day out, with their eyes firmly fixated on that paycheck that arrives every month. Granted, humans must hold jobs in order to feed themselves and their families. Yet, great consideration must be taken for the new Muslim seeking to achieve inner peace.

Whether you are a plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills or an accountant in Dubai, every moment of life should hold a *halal* purpose that not only benefits your soul, but the lives of those around you. Uncover your real purpose in life and look for ways to achieve it whether that means taking a cut in pay so that you can spend more time raising your children in the light of Islam or quitting your job in favor of one that can truly help others. By finding your real calling, you can find inner peace.



The Remembrance of God

One of the best prescriptions for achieving inner peace comes directly from the Quran:

{Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah; now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.}
(Ar-Ra'd 13: 28)

There are several places in the Quran where the remembrance of God is recommended as a means to achieve success in this life and the hereafter. Both new and seasoned Muslims can actually feel how soothing the remembrance of God is to the body, mind and soul. Praying the five obligatory prayers, engaging in acts of *dhikr* and reciting from the Quran have a calming effect on us.

When we have a connection with our Lord, we can achieve inner peace. When we ignore our Islamic duties, and that connection is severed, anxiety and chaos are sure to follow suit. Inner peace is a gift from God and can only be achieved in the light of Islam. The Muslim's tongue should always be busy with the remembrance of God whether



you're sitting at a traffic light and reciting a verse memorized from the Quran or listening to an Islamic lecture on your mobile device.

Forgiveness - Seek & Give

Forgiveness plays a vital role in our lives and the achievement of inner peace. A true Muslim consistently seeks forgiveness from God Almighty for his shortcomings and transgressions. No one is perfect and, regardless of your level of Islam, seeking forgiveness is a noble deed in Islam. Remember that only God can forgive our sins and remove the distress from our hearts. God Almighty says in the Quran:

{...Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves} (Al-Baqarah 2: 222)

You must also seek to forgive others. Holding a grudge against someone allows a host of negative emotions to flourish and take root, which is counterproductive to the attainment of inner peace. Instead, recognize that all humans have shortcomings and forgive the transgression based upon that. In the grand scheme of things, our petty



squabbles are nothing in the light of the Grandeur of God Almighty. However, such disputes do have an effect on achieving inner peace and must be dealt with swiftly.

Achieving inner peace brings a sense of harmony and purpose to life. It helps to alleviate chaos and brings a sense of structure to life so that you can focus on what is really important.

By achieving your own inner peace, you can become a better Muslim and really contribute to the benefit of your community.



■ Accept Destiny to Find Inner Peace

How many of us have had a day in our life when we become victims of bereavement, bad luck, sickness, and defamation, and in our pain and sorrow we let guilt, jealousy, and self-imposed loneliness make the bad situation even worse.

After all we are human.

Nonetheless, rather than act as victims we may use these situations to learn from them and improve ourselves and simply be comforted by the fact that God works in ways too sophisticated for our minds.

Belief in *Qadar*, or divine destiny, prevents us from becoming too despondent.

When tragedy strikes us, we must understand that it is the will of God, for it to happen. That way, we learn to accept it with patience and humility rather than despair and frustration.



A beautiful *hadith* comes to mind which has many a time left my heart at ease, where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) says:

"If the whole nation were to gather together to benefit you they would only benefit you with that which Allah had already written for you, and if the whole nation were to gather to harm you they could only harm you with that which Allah had already written to harm you. The pen has been lifted and the ink has dried." (Ahmad)

In fact, I have this copied and pasted in many places around the house to remind my family and myself foremost to live each day to the fullest, not dwell on yesterday or consider what might happen tomorrow.

It is vital to the Muslim's belief that we understand this concept. After all, the word Muslim means "one who submits to the will of God." By accepting His power, knowledge and control of our destiny, we learn to submit to what He has prescribed for us. Inner peace can only be achieved if the obstacles that are beyond our control are accepted by us patiently as part of God's destiny.



Despite this notion being easy to understand, some individuals have erroneous ideas about fate and destiny and imagine that this doctrine causes stagnation and inactivity, restraining man from all forms of effort to improve his life.

The Prophet expressed himself movingly on this matter where he stressed.

"An age will come for the people of my community when they will commit sin and inequity, and in order to justify their corruption and pollution, they will say: 'God's fate and destiny decreed that we act thus.' If you encounter such people, tell them I disown them."

The hadith explains that despite the fact that God has a foreknowledge of everything that He created and the events unfolding themselves exactly according to it, this does not imply that man has been completely deprived of the freedom of action. The foreknowledge of God is an acknowledged fact, but it should not be interpreted in the sense of predestination, for if we do so, we shall have to conjure up eternity as a store of ready-made events, from



which they drop one by one like a glass hour and its sand particles.

It is imperative though we understand that God does have knowledge over all things. He knows what will happen to us before we do. He knows the outcome of all of our decisions. He has stated in the Quran that everything that will happen throughout all creation was already written.

{No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees (*Al-Lawh Al-Mahfouz*) before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah.} (Al-Hadid 57: 22)

Prophet Muhammad also said:

"Allah wrote down the decrees of creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth." (Muslim)

It is significant as good practicing Muslims who believe in this divine destiny to try to live according to the laws of Islam, pray to God for guidance when making decisions (*Istikharah*), and put our best effort forward in everything



we do. Then, and only then, we should leave the outcome of these actions to God and willingly accept whatever He has decreed.

I personally have benefited in believing this decree. It has offered me peace of mind and contentment giving me the will power and determination to go further in the way of God. Many times, things I had planned to do have been disrupted. Where I have always been mindful to plant the seeds where I wanted to see blossom in my life I am always grounded when I see the posters around the house reminding me that the pens have lifted and the pages have dried.

I have found that true inner peace is found by submitting to God, living this life for Him, remembering Him and by making the Hereafter more of a priority than this life. We must acknowledge that whatever happens regardless of whether we had or have no control over, then God has put in it some good, whether or not we are able to grasp what is good in it; the good is still there. So we accept it!

I tell my children and friends if there are a lot of things we want to do and are unable to or something has served as an obstacle we are blessed to be comforted by the fact that



we tried and we prayed but God has other plans. It will be helpless to recapture the days and nights we wasted in worry, or the hurt we inflicted, or the love we failed to return because we were wallowing in our own sorrow.

By experiencing every day to the fullest, in full belief of our destiny and trust in God and His wonderful and mysterious ways, we can eliminate regrets and when the journey called life has finished we may face God on the Day of Judgment head held high simply because we submitted to His will and believed in His divine law.

Remember that whatever happens we must concede that it is God's destiny and that it is God's trial and accept that it ultimately is for our good and has good in it.

God created this world and us in it as a means to attain Paradise and the trials of this world is our own spiritual growth.

If we can accept this destiny and God in our hearts, we will find inner peace and have a more satisfying and productive life ultimately leading to happiness in the Hereafter.





■ Conclusion

Finally, if you are really searching for peace in your relation with Allah, then it is crucial that you submit to His will, as through full submission, the heart of a believer becomes content with whatever Allah has destined for him in this life.

Praise Allah in all cases, thank Him for His many favors, and be patient when faced with hardships, while always asking Him for His help and support however turbulent the world around you may seem right now, and live Paradise on earth with a heart filled with inner peace and contentment.

We ask Allah (SWT) to show us the path of peace in this world, and that He admits us to the Abode of Peace in the Hereafter, by His Mercy

Ameen