



TAQWA

# CONTENTS

- **1. Introduction to Virtues - pg.1**
- **2. Taqwa – The Shield of the Believer - pg.2**
- **3. Inculcation of Taqwa - pg.4**
- **4. The Prophet of Taqwa - pg.6**
- **5. The Spiritual Audit. pg.7**

## How to Use This Text

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, says in a hadith recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari, “Indeed, in the body there is an organ that, if it is sound, the entire body is sound; and if it is corrupted, the entire body is corrupted. Verily, (that organ) is the heart.”

The heart is everchanging – it can be adorned with the remembrance of Allah, be perfumed with the fragrance of the love of His messenger, and shine with the characteristics beloved to its Creator; or it can be desecrated by vain speech, smell with the heedlessness of Allah and His messenger, and shrivel with the ugliness of its character.

Every person has a choice to make in regard to one’s heart: do I wish to make it sound, perfumed, and adorned; or do I wish it desecrated, defiled, and demeaned? The choice, though clear and profound, is often obfuscated and disregarded; forgotten and lost in the noise and clamor of everyday life.

This text seeks to help reorient a person to that choice. In a world meticulously crafted to distract and disorient – Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an, “And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.” (3:185) – it shows the reader a path which returns one to the fitrah upon which s/he was created. It is a reminder and a friend, an advice for self-improvement and self-reflection.

To Truly to benefit from this text, the reader must vow the following to her or himself: to always be honest with oneself; to look into the spiritual mirror, no matter how difficult it gets or whatever one sees; to be simultaneously forgiving and demanding of oneself; and, most importantly, to remember that all this is done for the sake of Allah (SWT).

Having made this vow, the reader can then use this text for her or himself only: it does not qualify one to engage in criticism of others; rather, it is to hold a spiritual mirror to oneself. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said, “blessed is the one who is preoccupied with his own faults rather than the faults of others.” (Ahmad) This spiritual mirror is one of the most foundational elements of self-improvement. Umar (RA) said, “take yourself into account before you are taken into account.” In this mirror, the reader will find definitions of virtues which adorn the heart or diseases which rot it; tools for diagnosing oneself; advice on how to raise virtuous children or protect them from diseases; and exercises to inculcate virtues or cure diseases by oneself or together as a family.

Most importantly, this text denotes a journey. It does not end at the last page, nor did it begin with the first. Instead, we were on this journey from our births and will continue unto our deaths; perhaps this text will serve as a map for the hazards of the road and importance of its destination.

# Introduction to Virtues

Praise be to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all things in existence. It is He Who has created humankind in a natural state (the fitrah) – as He says in the Qur’an, “[Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people” (30:30) – and He Who leads them back to it through His divine guidance. Praise be to Him Who shaped the heart and placed it in the chest of people so they may remember Him by it.

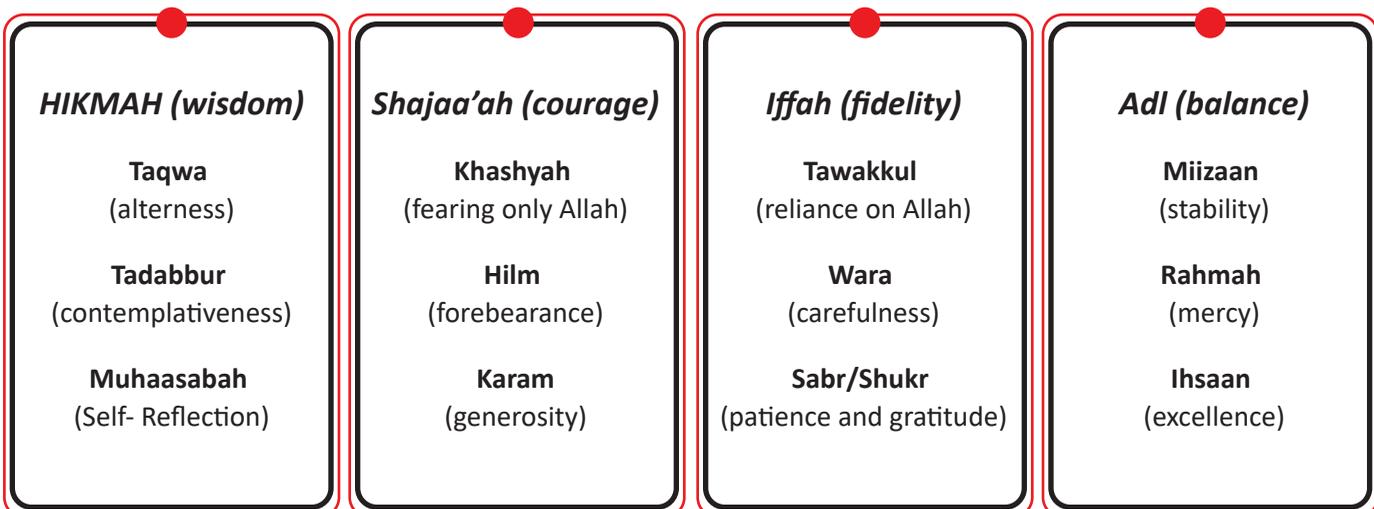
This heart He has created must be maintained and cleaned through careful consideration and action. The virtuous heart radiates the light of imaan, and the decadent heart shrivels and dries like a raisin in the sun.

This text identifies the core virtues which bring light to the heart and advises the reader in its inculcation in one’s own life.

## **What Are Virtues**

Virtues are patterns of behavior that become so consistent that they are characteristic of the person who possesses them. For example, if a person is forbearing in every circumstance to the extent that s/he is consistently calm and collected in heated situations, s/he possesses the characteristic of hilm or forbearance.

**We have identified 12 virtues divided into 4 categories:**



## **The Four Core Categories**

The four core categories are hikmah (wisdom), shajaa’ah (courage), ‘iffah (fidelity), and ‘adl (balance).

**Hikmah** is the ability to distinguish the important from the unimportant and prioritize. It includes understanding that Allah is the most important of all and to be constantly alert of him (taqwa), continuously engaging each action with thought and contemplation (tadabbur), and holding oneself accountable for missteps (muhaasabah)

**Shajaa’ah** is the courage to continuously act with the best of character despite the difficulty of the circumstances. It includes understanding that none is worthy of fear except Allah (SWT) (khashiyah), bearing difficulty and challenges with grace (hilm), and having the courage to continuously be generous with others despite ones own circumstance – within reason (karam).

**‘Iffah** is being faithful to Allah and abstaining

from that which displeases Him. It includes reliance on Him in knowing that which He commands is for the best (tawakkul), being careful in one’s matters to protect oneself from that which displeases Him (wara’), and being patient with and grateful for that which one has from His grace (Sabr/Shukr)

**Adl** is the balance which oversees all the other virtues. It includes the understanding that all things must be done within reason and balance (miizaan), that all things must have the goal of mercy (rahmah), and that everything worth doing is worth doing excellently (ihsaan).

Together, these four core categories and their twelve corresponding virtues lead to a sound heart. We pray that Allah (SWT) grants us the grace to fulfill our goal of inculcating the virtues in our hearts, that He makes our hearts sound, and He fills them with the light of imaan and love of Him and His messenger, peace

## Taqwa – The Shield of the Believer

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful. We praise Allah, the Lord of all planes of existence, and we send prayers and blessings upon the master of the prophets, the foremost of the believers, our prophet Muhammad, and upon his family and his companions all together.

As we begin this journey of transforming ourselves into virtuous human beings, we remember the saying of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, "Righteousness is good character." (Muslim) He, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, also said, "I was sent to perfect good character." (Al-Adab al-Mufrad) Character is built upon virtues, characteristics that come to embody the person who holds them; and chief amongst these characteristics our conception of taqwa.

Allah (SWT) calls out to humankind when He says, "O humankind, have taqwa of your Lord, Who created you from a single soul. . ." (4:1) He calls out to the believers and says, "O you who have believed, have taqwa of Allah as He is deserving, and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]." (3:102) The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah (SWT) be upon him, said, "I advise you to have taqwa, for it is indeed the chief of all matters." (Musnad Ahmad) He also said, "have taqwa of Allah wherever you are; perform good deeds after bad ones – the former will wipe out the later; and interact with people with good character."

Taqwa is the flower that blooms in the heart of the believer. The heart of the muttaqi is fragrant and enlightened. Its scent envelops those who surround it; it is a lamp for those encircled by darkness. Taqwa is the shield of the soft heart. It encases the heart with the protection of Allah and protects it from hardening and shriveling. This taqwa is the chief of all virtues, the gem at the center of the ring, the king upon the golden throne.

### What Is Taqwa

It is important to note that taqwa has not been translated in any of the above passages, ayaat, and ahadith. While certain translations do exist, they are not entirely useful for our purposes. Taqwa is often translated as "fear of Allah," but this translation leaves much to be desired. While fearing Allah (SWT) is one of the core concepts of Islam, taqwa encompasses much more than just fear of Him (SWT).

For example, the Qur'an uses taqwa in five different meanings. It can mean:

- To fear Allah, as in the ayah "O mankind, have taqwa of your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible thing." (22:1)
- To worship Allah (SWT), as in the ayah "He sends down the angels, with the inspiration of His command, upon whom He wills of His servants, [telling them], Warn that there is no deity except Me; so have taqwa of Me." (16:2)
- To abstain from the prohibited acts, as in the ayah, "And it is not righteousness to enter houses from the back, but righteousness is [in] one who fears Allah. And enter houses from their doors. And have taqwa of Allah that you may succeed." (2:189)
- To affirm the oneness of Allah (SWT), as in the ayah, "Indeed, those who lower their voices before the Messenger of Allah - they are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for taqwa. For them is forgiveness and great reward." (49:3)
- To be sincere, as in the ayah "And whoever honors the symbols of Allah - indeed, it is from the taqwa of hearts." (22:32)

Therefore, simply saying that taqwa is to fear Allah is to ascribe a simple meaning to a complex concept. To truly understand taqwa, we will explore its linguistic roots and the sayings of sahaba and ulamaa'.

### Taqwa Linguistically

Taqwa comes from the word waqaya, which means to protect a thing from something by the means of something else. It is in that meaning that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said,

**"Protect yourselves from the Fire (ittaqoo al-naara), even with half a date."  
(Nasa'i)**

Taqwa of Allah, then, would mean to protect oneself from Allah.

What can it possibly mean to protect ourselves from the Magnificent, the Almighty? How does one protect against Him Whose glimpse renders mountains to dust, Whose word can rend asunder the heavens

## Taqwa – The Shield of the Believer

and the earth, Whose being overwhelms all existence? How can one protect oneself from Allah?

The answer to this question is found in the story of Ka'ab ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him. Ka'ab ibn Malik was one of three sahaabah who, when called to fight for the sake of Allah, did not join the army at Tabuk and instead stayed behind in Madinah without excuse. When the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, returned from the expedition, he commanded that the three men be socially ostracized. They remained as such until Allah (SWT) revealed an ayat forgiving them:

*“Allah has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhajireen (those who emigrated to Madinah) and the Ansar (those who received those immigrants in Madinah) who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them.*

*Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful. And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.”(9:117-118)*

The phrase of Allah

**“and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him”**

contains our answer: there is no protection from Allah except with Allah.

Protection from Allah through Allah

To seek protection from Allah through Allah, one must first be constantly conscious of Allah. Indeed, Allah (SWT) is all knowing, all aware. He says in the Qur'an:

*“Have you not considered that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There is in no private conversation of three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, of all things, Knowing.” (58:7)*

The first step to that protection, then, is to be aware of the awareness of Allah, to be conscious of His consciousness of us. Allah (SWT)'s knowledge envelops us; His sight pierces through us. He is forever aware, ever watchful. The consciousness of this is the beginning of taqwa.

To protect ourselves from Allah through Allah, we must also beseech the unbounded mercy of the Most Merciful. We do this in two ways: by worshiping Him with utmost sincerity and abstaining from that which He has forbidden.

Indeed, how can a servant beseech the protection of Allah and disobey Him simultaneously? How can we lie and cheat and hurt one another, then turn to Him and beg Him for His protection – knowing full well that we have disobeyed His command? Except, perhaps, in that we were heedless of Him for the moments of disobedience, and we beg His forgiveness for those moments of heedlessness.

If we were to characterize this feeling in one word, then, that word would be “*alertness.*” To be alert is to be aware of danger; to be alert is to be constantly on guard. Imbedded in our alertness, however, is an understanding of the truth of Allah – that His power is beyond encompassing, and only He can protect us from Himself. Taqwa, then, is to be ever alert of Allah.

When we understand the consequences of this alertness, we find that this definition encompasses all the meanings of taqwa in the Qur'an:

- **We are alert of Him because we fear Him**
- **We are alert of the truth about Him, so we worship Him**
- **We are alert of His presence, so we abstain from His prohibitions**
- **We are alert of the truth about Him, so we affirm His oneness**
- **We are alert to the fact that nothing can protect us but Him, so we are sincere to Him**

## Inculcation of Taqwa

It can become easy to associate taqwa with images of religiosity: a beard or scarf, marks of prayer, etc. The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, however, was very explicit about where taqwa is located when he said, "*Taqwa is here!*" and pointed to his chest three times. (Tirmidhi) Taqwa is therefore a hidden gem, one which is unrelated to appearance, race, or lineage:

*"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the one who has the most taqwa. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."* (49:13)

In this journey to reform our hearts, however, we must be able to diagnose ourselves, to know whether or not we are achieving the goals of our reformation. To understand our own relationship with taqwa, we must look to the home of taqwa: the heart.

### *Some Signs of Taqwa*

#### **1. Particularity with the shari'ah in our personal lives**

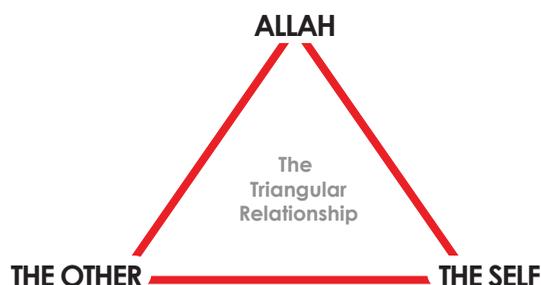
The shari'ah literally means a path to water, which is a wonderful metaphor for the function of the shari'ah. The shari'ah is a path, and the destination is the life-giving water of the love of Allah. The path itself is important; we attain through it that which revives our hearts. S/he who walks the path reaches the water, and s/he who reaches the water revives his/her heart.

While particularity with the outward manifestations of the law does not guarantee taqwa, it cannot be acquired without paying attention to the full scope of the law. A lot of attention is often paid to what we wear; with which hand we eat; and how we drink; and, while these are important, they do not reflect the full scope of the *shari'ah*.

The shari'ah regulates more than just our personal behavior; it also regulates how we deal with others. This is the concept of *huqooq al-ibaad* (rights of servants) – that every servant of Allah (SWT) has rights that cannot be violated. To violate these rights is a greater violation than to violate personal regulation. This can be seen by the fact that, if one wishes forgiveness for the violation of personal obligations, s/he need but raise his/her hands with sincerity to Allah (SWT) and be forgiven. To be forgiven for violations against others, however, one must first seek forgiveness of that person in order to be forgiven by Allah.

#### **The Triangular Relationship**

This example demonstrates a very important concept: that every action, whether personal or interpersonal, is somehow associated with Allah (SWT). We will call this the Triangular Relationship.



We can understand from this image that every action takes place under the watchful gaze of Allah (SWT). Whether that action is personal or interpersonal, it is always attached to the pleasure of Allah. In this way, the triangular relationship governs all our actions. To truly and properly apply the shari'ah, we must be ever conscious of our relationship with Allah (SWT) when engaging in actions that are both personal and interpersonal.

#### **2. Good Company**

Keeping the company of good people is central to maintaining one's own taqwa. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "A person is on the religion of his friend; so consider with whom you make friends." (Abu Dawud) The Qur'an also notes the lament of those who enter the hell fire: "Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend." (25:28)

Friendships and company have a deep effect on our hearts. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "*The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof.*" (Bukhari)

If we truly wish to be *muttaqeen*, we surround ourselves with those who remind us of Allah and His Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. If we do not, however, then we smell with the second-hand smoke of bad company.

## Inculcation of Taqwa

### 3. Personal Devotion

The believer should always strive to be in constant remembrance of Allah (SWT). He says in the Qur'an,  
*"O you who have believed, remember Allah with much remembrance. And exalt Him morning and afternoon. It is He who confers blessing upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darkneses into the light. And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful. Their greeting the Day they meet Him will be, "Peace." And He has prepared for them a noble reward."*

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said,

**"Always keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime." (Ibn Majah)**

The dhikr of Allah (SWT) softens the heart. The heart that remembers Allah constantly beats with His Holy name, radiates His light, and eliminates the darkness of heedlessness. This remembrance can be achieved in many ways.

One way is to establish personal adhkaar (litanies) as a matter of habit. Start with the tasbeeh after prayer, or invocations (du'aa) from the sunnah for things like waking up, sleeping, entering the washroom, eating, etc. As A'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her reported,

**"The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, used to remember Allah at all moments." (Muslim)**

Another is to establish a habitual recitation of the Qur'an. The sahabah, may Allah be pleased with them, used to habitually finish the Qur'an. It doesn't need to be a significant portion every day; even a page done habitually is better than reciting a lot one day and leaving it the rest of the days. Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: *"Take on only as much as you can do of good deeds, for the best of deeds is that which is done consistently, even if it is little."* (Ibn Majah)

As such, 10 minutes of recitation every day is better than an hour one day and leaving it for a long

time. The key is to build the remembrance of Allah into our routines, so that it becomes a part of our lives. Establishing taqwa as part of the mundane is as important as establishing it as part of the spectacular.

### Conclusion

Allah (SWT) continuously calls upon the believers in the Qur'an when He says,



**"O you who believe, have taqwa of Allah."**

Taqwa means to protect oneself from something with something else; the only thing that can protect us from Allah is Allah Himself. We seek His pleasure and love through our hearts and our deeds, keeping good company, and making our tongues moist with the remembrance of Allah.

May Allah (SWT) open our hearts and fill them with taqwa. May He join us in this world and raise us on the day of judgement amongst the muttaqeen. May He make our journey to Him, the journey of the transformation of the heart, easy and successful. May He turn our hearts towards Him, and fill them with love of Him and His Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon Him. May He enter us all together into paradise, where we may take abodes as neighbors of His blessed Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

## The Prophet of Taqwa

The Holy Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, was the complete manifestation of every virtue. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an,

**"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers often." (33:21)**

As such, we see in him an example for us to follow and emulate in our project of improving our character.

While the devotion of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is well known, he manifested his taqwa in how he treated the rights of others as well. Indeed, it was one of the most important matters to him upon the time of his passing.

On the authority of Fadl ibn Abbas, he said, *"The holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, came to me, so I went to him. I found him indisposed and having bound his head. He said, 'take me by my hand O Fadl.' So I took him by his hand until we reached the minbar. He sat upon it then said to me, 'call the people.' So I called onto the people, they gathered to him. He praised Allah (AJ) and glorified Him then said, 'O People! My time of passing has come near. So whomever I may have struck his back, here is my back! So*

*retaliate accordingly. And whomever I may have abused his honor, here is my honor! So retaliate accordingly. And from whomever I may have taken wealth, here is my wealth! So take from it. And let not a person say, 'I fear the rancor from the Messenger of Allah,' for rancor is not in my nature nor befitting me. Indeed, the most beloved to me from you is he who takes his right and absolves me, so that I meet Allah as a pure soul. And, indeed, I do not see that as availed of me until I stand amongst you over and over again." (Narrated by Qurtubi in his Awsat)*

As we see from the above hadith, the most immediate thought in the mind of the holy messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, close to his time of passing was about the rights of others he may have accidentally violated. Whether that right was social, financial, or physical, he was acutely aware that his relationship with Allah (SWT) is directly impacted by the way he fulfills the rights of others.

What we can learn from this hadith is that we, too, must be continuously **aware of the rights of others** in our interactions with them. Those rights directly affect the way in which we will meet with Allah (SWT) on the day of judgement. If we have wronged others socially, financially, or physically, we must reach out to them and seek their forgiveness so that we may be availed of our responsibility before Allah.

القلب  
الموخرن

أَلَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ،

وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ. أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ

**There is a piece of flesh in the body, that, if it is sound, the whole body is sound; but if it is spoiled, the whole body is spoiled. Indeed it is the heart. (Bukhari)**

# The Spiritual Audit

## Taqwa in Our Relationships

As we read the following passages, let us take some time to really think deeply about ourselves. Do we recognize ourselves in the behavior described below? Can I identify myself in the characters? Spiritual transformation cannot begin without real self-reflection.

**“The best of you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best of you to his family.” (Ibn Majah)**

*Taqwa is not an abstract concept; in the Qur'an, it is most often used as a verb. Allah (SWT) commands us to practice taqwa, not simply understand taqwa. The first command in the Qur'an states, “O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you do taqwa.”*

In fact, yattaqoon (they practice taqwa), tattaqoon (you practice taqwa), and ittaqoo (practice taqwa) are the most common usages of the word in the Qur'an. Taqwa, then, is performed and practiced and is not simply an intellectual endeavor.

Practice of taqwa only truly manifests against tension and opposition. It is easy to practice something in times of ease; it is when things are difficult that we manifest true practice. Tensions such as these come about in our everyday lives, particularly in our relationships. In order to truly attain taqwa, then, we must consistently practice it in our relationships; and the most important relationships are within the family.

## A Note On Abuse

Before we begin the discussion, it is important to note that abuse of all forms is a lack of taqwa. Abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, or sexual. When this abuse occurs, the abuser is demonstrating a lack of taqwa. This is because s/he has forgotten that they stand before Allah (SWT), and that Allah (SWT) is watching their every action. In that moment, they have forgotten the triangular relationship of actions. They believe that their actions are only between one and other, and they forget that in every action there is a line that connects them to Allah. There is never an excuse to curse, scream, berate, hit, coerce, or control. If asked “*did you hit/curse/scream/coerce/control,*” and the

answer is “yes, because. . .”, know that this is abusive action. There is no legitimizing, no excusing, no explaining that action. Abuse is abuse. Fear Allah; have taqwa of Allah in abuse.

If you believe you are either abuser of abused, please contact professional service providers immediately. Either of the two Imams are available for counseling, or you can seek counseling through qualified Muslim counselors who can be found at <http://www.muslimcounselors.org/PMCL/Welcome.html>

## Taqwa In Our Marriages

The manifestation of taqwa in our marriages, or in any realm of life in general, revolves entirely around acting in accordance to the desire of Allah (SWT). We will look at some common manifestations of lack of taqwa and ask ourselves the question, “**does this reflect my behavior in my marriage?**”

- Lack of fulfilling obligations while demanding full rights
- Neglecting emotional needs

### *Lack of Fulfilling Obligations While Demanding Full Rights*

One of the signs that we have a problem of taqwa in our marital relationship is if we do not focus on fulfilling our obligations but become indignant when our own rights are violated. This has two aspects to it: first, that we do not fulfill our obligations, and, second, that we demand our full rights.

Allah (SWT) has decreed rights and obligations for each spouse. For example, an obligation on the husband is to provide for his family financially and treat his wife kindly. Similarly, a wife has an obligation to not be disrespectful to her husband. The muttaqi (person of taqwa) does not simply focus on his or her rights; rather, the muttaqi focuses on what is his or her obligations before Allah (SWT).

If a husband is neglecting his duty to provide basic needs for his family, he is negligent not only before his wife and children but also before Allah. This does not mean, of course, that he is duty-bound to provide a single-family home and multiple cars; Allah (SWT) will only hold him accountable for that of which he is capable.

The first question a spouse should ask is “am I fulfilling my obligations before Allah (SWT)?” Let’s take time to ask ourselves that question. Take a piece of paper and make a list of spousal obligations before Allah

## The Spiritual Audit

(SWT), then make a checkmark next to those that have been met and an “x” next to those that can be improved.

For more information on spousal obligations, see the book *Before You Tie The Knot* by Imam Magid and Salma Abugideiri.

### *Neglecting Needs*

Part of taqwa of Allah (SWT) is understanding that every action done in this world has a consequence with our relationship with Allah (SWT). The same can be said about inaction. For example, if one sees another person in desperate need, failure to provide that person assistance, a form of inaction, is blameworthy.

Similarly, in marriage, each partner has needs. These needs maybe physical, such as shelter or intimacy, or these needs may be emotional, such as love and compassion. We must recognize that, by marrying, Allah (SWT) has placed in a position where another person has become dependent on us to fulfill some of their needs. Once we realize this, a lack of fulfilling needs is a lack of taqwa of Allah, because it rejects the responsibility that He (SWT) has placed on us.

The most common area of neglect in this fashion is in emotional needs. While needs like shelter and intimacy are easily identified, emotional needs can be more difficult to both understand and fulfill. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was a very affectionate man who loved to be loving and affectionate with his family members – his wives and children especially.

Paying attention to each other’s needs is about creating a culture of love, affection, and companionship in the house. We can begin by ensuring that we are saying loving things to one another on a daily basis. Secondly, make sure to have time scheduled to spend with each other at the least on a weekly basis. We can also create a list of things we appreciate about each other and share that with our spouse.

### **Taqwa with Our Children**

Taqwa with our children manifests itself in multiple ways. In one way, it manifests in how we treat them and deal with them. In another way, it manifests itself in the priorities we create for them and how we choose to raise them. Both of these are important in understanding our own taqwa as well as raising them as muttaqeen. The ways in which this taqwa manifests differs based on the age of the children.

### ● *Taqwa with Children 0-7 Years Old*

Children of all ages can get out of hand, but especially children in their formative years. There are ways of dealing with those situations that demonstrate taqwa, however, and those that manifest a lack of it. For example, scolding a child in a controlled manner is not necessarily a lack of taqwa. Yelling, berating, and demeaning the child, however, is to forget the responsibility we have over him or her. We have to practice taqwa of Allah in our power over our dependents.

In order to raise muttaqeen, we have to make it a priority to instill taqwa in them from a young age. Take time to talk to them about remembering Allah at all times, especially in times of conflict. Instead of scolding them for their actions, try to explain that such and such action is disliked by Allah (SWT), and that we strive continuously to earn the pleasure and love of Allah through our actions.



### ● *Taqwa with Children 7-14*

For children passed their formative years, we can make the mistake of handing over the parenting responsibilities to tv, video games, and internet. This can be damaging in many ways. Embedded in every story that is delivered either through tv, video games, or the internet are themes and undertones that shape the way the child begins to view the world. Seemingly harmless or educational programs can teach concepts that are entirely alien to the Islamic tradition. It is from

## The Spiritual Audit

the taqwa of a parent to at the very least be extremely cognizant of the material which a child is consuming and seek to counteract secularized morality and concepts with reminders of taqwa of Allah (SWT).

For children who have grown passed their formative years, we must begin to pay attention to their Islamic identity and education. We cannot assume that they will grow to love and have taqwa of Allah automatically; indeed, left to their own devices, more likely they will absorb the milieu of the greater society and school – to be at best indifferent towards Allah (SWT). To raise muttaqeen, we have to make Allah (SWT) a constant part of their lives by pursuing Islamic education and identity. A masjid environment, Muslim friends, and Islamic settings must be a part of their daily lives, as well as learning to read and understand the Qur'an and love the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

### ● *Taqwa with Children 14-21*

When children are teenagers and older, they become acutely aware of the contradiction between our words and actions. In order to raise children of taqwa, it becomes increasingly important to reconcile our own lives before we preach taqwa to our children. In this way, the most important interaction we can have with our older children is to live a lifestyle of taqwa. If we make compromises in our jobs, our homes, our finances, etc., our older children will become aware of that and make the same compromises in their lives by using us as justification.

It also becomes imperative that we teach our children how to manage and control their desires at this age. During this time in their life, they are bombarded with their desires for the first time, and the physiology of their body makes these desires both intense and immediate. These are desires for fun, acceptance, intimacy, etc. We need to make sure we have made ample time for them in our lives, and that the love between us and bond with them is strong enough for them to communicate with us about their daily struggles.

### ● *Taqwa with Children 21 and Older*

When children pass the age of twenty one, they become their own people – adults with their own lives, choices, and need for fulfillment. This can become difficult to process as a parent, particularly when they marry and have their own children. We have to ensure

that when we engage with them we are always careful of our relationship with Allah (SWT). This is especially true when engaging with their spouses.

Muslim marriages can come under severe pressure when parents become overbearing in the marriages of their children. We have to fear Allah (SWT) in our interaction with our sons and daughters in-law. We should be careful in our demands of them, and extremely careful in how we speak with them. If we create a rift between our children and their spouses, this will become a rift in our own relationship with Allah (SWT). If you are having difficulty in a relationship between you, your child, and his or her spouse, please seek professional help from either the imams or professional Muslim counselors.

### **Taqwa with Parents**

Our taqwa of Allah is directly tied to our good -treatment of our parents. It is not possible to be a muttaqi and to neglect or mistreat our parents. There are countless stories of seemingly religious people neglecting and abusing their parents. When parents grow older, they become the responsibility of their children, a duty before the eyes of Allah (SWT).

This is particularly true for parents who have special conditions, whether those conditions are medical, financial, or social. Some elderly parents are not able to make ends meet through the means available to them; it is from the taqwa of their children to be financially responsible for their parents. Some parents have significant medical conditions; it is from the taqwa of their children to assist them with the life circumstances of their conditions.

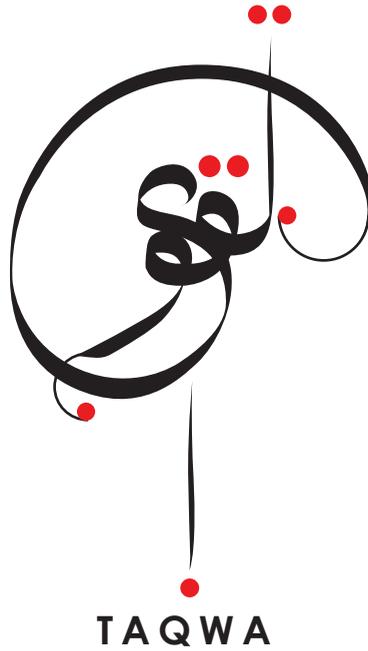
We must also be careful not to neglect our parents in their old age. They have a right to be visited, to have relationships with the children they worked so hard to raise and the grandchildren that are so dear to them. It is from the taqwa of Allah to establish regular social connections with our parents, to make sure that their social, spiritual, and communal needs are met along with their physical needs.

## The Spiritual Audit

### Taqwa is Interpersonal as Much as Intrapersonal

From this section, it can be demonstrated that taqwa is manifested as much in interactions with others as in personal devotions. A person can pray and fast to the point of excess, but unless s/he is practicing kind treatment of others, especially family members, and imparting the rights of others onto them, s/he is not taking his/her taqwa seriously. The rights and treatment of others is directly related to the rights of Allah, and so taqwa cannot be established without establishing the rights and good treatment of others.

القلب  
المؤمن



فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارَ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبَ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ - 22:46

**For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.**

IMAM MAGID - CHIEF CONTRIBUTOR

SAAD YACOOB - WRITER

SABA ASAD - GRAPHIC DESIGNER



www.adamscenter.org  
46903 Sugarland Road, Sterling, VA 20164