

THE BOOK OF ASSISTANCE - A SPIRITUAL ASCENSION



Imam Khalid Latif

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- As mentioned in previous sessions, spirituality is a mechanism for processing that which is around us. In modern thought, it is separate from rituals, but we know within Islam that it happens with those actions. Spirituality gives meaning, growth and perspective. It allows us to deepen our relationship with ourselves and then Allah SWT.
- Last week, Imam Khalid went over yaqeen (certainty). That is the goal for everyone within our faith and is what we strive towards. It looks different for everyone. Before you take that first practical step with actions, Imam Al-Haddad tells us to take a look at our intentions.

Intentions

- Intentions create an opportunity to know and reflect about the steps are going to be before you take them. This is the whole point of worship. It is important to improve upon them and reflect upon them. It is to know why you are going to do and what you do, before you do it.

- The idea of purpose, understanding, depth, beauty, and excellence cannot be done by doing actions mechanically (without consciousness). Of course, there are things in which we do not have to make an intention for every time, such as blinking or taking a breath. Intentions are not made for every single act, but we need to know why we do what we do. It determines whether we do it or not.
- There are duas for many things the Prophet SAW did, and it was prior to the action. There are blessings in learning those duas. He knows why he will do it before he does it (SAW). There is a consciousness before he starts those acts, even before eating, he is aware and mindful (SAW).
- This mindfulness helps us stay away from the bad actions, as one cannot curse at someone or gossip in the name of Allah SWT. It makes us ask ourselves, "Is this something I should do, or should I leave it behind?"
- On the road to certainty, there is niyyah, intentions. Imam Al-Haddad is telling us we should think about our intention before we embark on it, and if not, at least doing so after the fact.

Habits

- We notice people around us doing actions out of the sake of habit. By default, it is neither a good or a bad thing. Prophet Ibrahim (as) asked his people why they were worshipping the idols, and they responded by saying the people before us worshipped them.

- Although you can mimic and do someone else's action, you can't make an intention by someone else's intention. We are not supposed to be separate from the community, but we do have individualized components. Allah SWT has given us a sound mind ('aql) and intellect
- By instinct, we are creatures of habit, and a lot of times we do not ask ourselves why we do what we do. The point is to start thinking about it.
- Within a habit, there are three general components:
 1. Trigger/Cause
 2. The act itself
 3. The craving/reward
- Many focus on number two, the action, as in "do not do this" or saying things are halal or haram. In the other components, however, there is a necessity to think by asking myself: Why am I doing what I do? Why do I watch things I am not supposed to? Why do I get angry or lazy? Why do I overeat? Why is my charity or prayer not consistent?
- Imam Khalid used the example of taking a break at 2pm to eat cookies. There are a host of reasons this could happen. You may just want a break (so you just take a walk instead), or it could be about hunger (so you eat carrots instead), or maybe you enjoy talking to your coworker. In essence, these are all different. They are different causes and cravings being satisfied.

- It is important to start thinking about craving is being satisfied within our habits. You want to be present when constructing good habits and then asking ourselves, "what are some things I want to build a habit of?"
- The word in Arabic for desire is hawaa, which means the wind. Essentially that the wind sways and pulls you in all directions.
- Actions are by their intentions: The Prophet SAW tells us in an authentic narration:

" إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ."

"The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he emigrated for." Sahih Bukhari

- There is an overt emphasis and exclusivity here, that all actions are by their intentions. Establishing that you need to be present within the action. There is a relationship within the action to its intention. The place of this intention is not on the tongue, but rather in the heart.
- Sincerity can turn mundane acts like eating food into worship, if you may the intention to eat to give you more strength. It moves past the physical and requires you to think deeply. Of course, this does not apply to every action, like blinking, so we do not need to be paranoid.

- Intentions are also by their endings. If you are studying medicine with the intention of helping people as a doctor, it may be that your intention was not completely sincere. It does not mean you cannot change your mind, but true intention requires consistency and persistency. It requires self-care so you do not burn out.
- Intentions also do not affect sin, as slander is still slander, regardless of the intention. A malicious intention can also turn good deeds into bad deeds. If you're doing something wrong, it is still wrong.
- There are a multitude of intentions one can make for even one action, and you get reward for every intention. The intention itself can be better than the action.

In summary

- You want to be present within your actions. Dig deep into your components and reflect. A key component of this is vulnerability; many people faultily judge our intentions and do not allow us to understand ourselves.
- If you want success, perfect your objectives by reflecting deeply upon them. After doing so, seek refuge in Allah SWT and depend on Him.

FAQs

- What is the goal we are aiming towards?
- Before acting towards that goal, what should you have?
- What is the Arabic word for intention?
- What are the three components of a habit?
- What is the hadith of the Prophet SAW relating to actions?
- How can actions like eating food be turned into worship?
- Can I commit a sin if I have the right intention?
- Why is it important to have niyya before you begin your journey to Yaqeen?
- Why is it important to continuously reflect/improve upon why we do what we do?
- What is the significance of saying duas before doing multiple actions in our lives, such as eating, sleeping, drinking, driving etc?
- What is that act doing for you, why are you doing that act, what is the cause of that act?
- What does A'mal mean?