

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

PROPHETIC CONNECTIONS



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SESSION 2

Becoming Better Listeners

- Our Deen is based on connection to one another and in order to pass on this religion and help people through difficult moments, we have to learn to listen to one another.
- Our presence in another person's life can actually be an inspiration for them. In that tough moment, allow a person to speak. Listen deeply to meanings not words, then learn and reflect.
- We need to learn to be present for people in our relationships. While presence is the most sacred thing, the worst thing is to give physical proximity without true presence.
- Similarly, we have to have a presence in our worship with Allah. For example, while praying, our minds should not go astray or be distracted.
- Allah is teaching us how to be present with people because every day five times a day, we have to be present with Him.
 - Zayd ibn Khalid reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

مَنْ تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ وُضُوءَهُ ثُمَّ صَلَّى رَكَعَتَيْنِ لَا يَسْهُو فِيهِمَا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ
“Whoever performs ablution in the best manner, then prays two cycles, without being unmindful in either of them, his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Sunan Abi Dawud)

- We cannot build relationships with people until we are able to build a solid relationship with ourselves. Hence, we have to learn about ourselves by listening to ourselves.

The Importance of Listening to Ourselves

- #1. Emotions
 - To understand our own emotions. The emotions that one has yet to come to terms with, serves as a filter for the messages that come inside of them.
 - Distortion occurs when a person may have emotional baggage in their lives. Hence, they might misunderstand the intended message that is being conveyed.
- #2. Healing
 - To start the healing process. Only until one is able to understand what's going on deeper inside of them, will they be able to heal from it and connect to themselves.
- #3. Tawbah
 - To be able to do tawbah. Tawbah is a feeling of remorsefulness and a realization for what we've done. By understanding the source of the sin, one is able to uproot the sin.
- #4. Motivation
 - To motivate ourselves. Fear and hope are two of the greatest emotions within human beings. When one is able to highlight their fears and hopes, they are able to motivate themselves to be closer to Allah.

Ways to Become a Better Listener

- One of the important parts of becoming a better listener is making sure that the noise inside of us is not disturbing the messages that are coming to us.

- In our Islamic tradition, there's a concept of muraqabah; contemplating on what's inside of ourselves. It helps us push ourselves towards khayr so we can spiritually grow.
- Here are some practical ways to help us become better listeners:
- #1. Create Silence
 - One cannot listen to what's inside of themselves when there's a constant stream of noise around them.
 - The beginning of revelation did not start until the Prophet (ﷺ) retreated to the cave for solitude. It began in a place of silence.
 - Create moments of silence by having some down time; staying away from people etc., to allow the external noises to dissipate.
- #2. Question Yourself
 - Our religion is based on a concept called masuliyyah, which refers to the sense of accountability and integrity. It derives from the word sa-ala which means to question.
 - Questions create ability and responsibility. The ability is to respond to a question asked and the ability to respond is the responsibility.
 - By learning to question ourselves, we'll find answers that enable us to accentuate the good and work on mitigating the negative, and search on our intentions from the inside.
- #3. Journaling
 - Journaling is important because it helps one express and explain their emotions; speaking about what they are feeling inside.
 - It doesn't necessarily have to be written in a diary; it could be a recorded voice note to commemorate the moment.
- #4. Affirmations
 - Practice saying phrases or anything to verbally motivate ourselves, and push ourselves to be better.

- It is the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) to have daily affirmations. For example, he taught us to say ‘Hasbunallah Wanikmal Wakil (حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل)’, meaning “Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best Disposer of affairs”, seven times in the morning and in the evening.
- Affirmations work when we understand what we are saying now. Select supplications from the Sunnah (i.e. in Hisn al-Muslim), and stay consistent with them.

Connecting with Allah

- The point of listening is connection. We need to build a connection with Allah to establish a stronger relationship with Allah.
- These are ways to build a connection with Allah:
- #1. Learn the responses
 - Du’a is supplication; where we ask Allah for something. The Prophet (ﷺ) tells us how Allah responds to our du’a.
 - Abu Sa’id al-Khudri reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَدْعُو بِدَعْوَةٍ لَيْسَ فِيهَا إِثْمٌ وَلَا قَطِيعَةٌ رَجِمَ إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا إِحْدَى ثَلَاثٍ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعْجَلَ لَهُ دَعْوَتُهُ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يَدْخِرَهَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ مِنَ الشَّوْءِ مِثْلَهَا قَالُوا إِذَا نَكَّرَ قَالَ اللَّهُ أَكْثَرُ

“There is no Muslim who calls upon Allah, without sin or cutting family ties, but that Allah will give him one of three answers: He will quickly fulfill his supplication, He will store it for him in the Hereafter, or He will divert an evil from him similar to it.” They said, “In that case we will ask for more.” The Prophet said, “Allah has even more.” (Musnad Ahmad)

- When we reach out to Allah throughout the difficulty we are given, we are building our relationship with Him.
- The ability to make du’a is our calling to Allah, and therefore, it is the answer to our needs even if it seems like the actual du’a we make is unanswered.

- #2. Communicate with depth, breadth and frequency
 - Depth:
 - Speaking to Allah on the deepest level; of our pains, sins etc. – the things we never tell any soul about.
 - Communicating deeply without having to hold anything back, is a sign that the relationship is thriving.
 - Breadth:
 - Speaking to Allah about everything; the broader the conversations, the stronger the relationship.
 - This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) asked us to ask Allah for anything; even the insignificant things. The objective is not the thing, but the relationship which is built.
 - Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

لَيْسَ أَلْأَحَدُكُمْ رَبُّهُ حَاجَتُهُ كُلَّهَا حَتَّى يَسْأَلَ شَيْعَ نَعْلِهِ إِذَا انْقَطَعَ
“Let one of you ask his Lord for his needs, all of them, even for a shoestring when his breaks.” (Sunan al-Tirmidhi)
- Frequency:
 - Speaking to Allah frequently, at any time. Communicating in small bits and increasing its frequency, strengthens the relationship.
 - Sending a quick message shows the frequency of us thinking about someone deeply. Similarly, quick, deep, broad messages help build a relationship with Allah.
- #3. Respond when listening
 - Allah said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ
O believers! Respond to Allah and to His Messenger (8:24)
 - When we approach the Qur’an and listen to it, we have to interact with the words and understand its meanings.
 - The Prophet (ﷺ) would interact with the verses he recited.

عَنْ حُذَيْفَةَ أَنَّهُ صَلَّى مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَكَانَ يَقُولُ فِي رُكُوعِهِ " سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ " . وَفِي سُجُودِهِ " سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى " . وَمَا مَرَّ بِآيَةِ رَحْمَةٍ إِلَّا وَقَفَ عِنْدَهَا فَسَأَلَ وَلَا بِآيَةِ عَذَابٍ إِلَّا وَقَفَ عِنْدَهَا فَتَعَوَّذَ .

and that he , (ﷺ) Hudhaifah said that he prayed along with the Prophet said when bowing, "Glory be to my mighty Lord, "and when he prostrated himself, "Glory be to my most high Lord," when he came to a verse which spoke of mercy, he stopped and made supplication, and when he came to a verse which spoke of punishment, he stopped and sought refuge in Allah.(Sunan Abi Dawud)

- Similarly, we can talk back when we listen or recite the Qur'an. If we hear a question, stop and respond because this is where our connection with Allah is being built.
- For example, when Allah gives a command, we should drop everything and we do it as a response.
- The Qur'an asks over 78 questions that are there to shape how we think, but we don't respond to them all. There should be a reflection in our recitation.