

## **258910 - Ways of making it easier to do acts of worship and find pleasure in them**

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### **the question**

Is it normal for a Muslim to find it very difficult to do acts of worship and be unable to do them because of some fault in his character, such as cowardice, for example, or other problems, so he says to himself: if I truly knew who Allah is, I would be able to do this act of worship easily? And this is true; he begins his journey by learning about Allah through looking at and pondering the universe, so as to increase his faith, yet despite that those acts of worship remain difficult for him, so he becomes very sad for his helplessness and cowardice. But I realised that looking at and pondering the universe and the blessings of Allah on its own is not sufficient; rather there must also be supplication, because it is the key to divine help. Is thinking in this way to console myself correct? I hope you will give a clear answer.

### **Detailed answer**

There are many means of attaining divine help and being enabled to do acts of worship and find pleasure in them. One of the greatest of these means is what you mentioned of knowing and loving Allah, and calling upon Him in supplication.

1. Knowing Allah cannot be attained only by looking at and pondering His visible signs. Rather it is also attained by studying the verses of His revelation, which means reading His book and reflecting upon it, and studying the Sunnah of His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), which is also revelation from Allah, may He be exalted.

The more a person ponders and reflects on the verses of Allah, the more his heart will be filled with love for Him and knowledge of Him, and the more he will turn to Him. As a result of that, his faith and certainty will increase, and this will make it easier for him to do acts of worship, no matter how difficult they may seem. Hence the righteous offered their souls and lives in Allah's cause.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely;

The ones who establish prayer, and from what We have provided them, they spend.

Those are the believers, truly. For them are degrees [of high position] with their Lord and forgiveness and noble provision} [al-Anfal 8:2-4].

The companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to say: Come, let us believe for an hour – and they would remember Allah, may He be exalted.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Mu'adh ibn Jabal would say to a man: Let us sit and believe and remember Allah, may He be exalted.

Abu'l-Yaman narrated: Safwan told us, from Shurayh ibn 'Ubayd, that 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah would take one of his companions by the hand and say: Come, let us believe for an hour, for we are in a gathering of dhikr."(*Majmu' al-Fatawa* 7/225).

2. The more a person reflects on the signs of Allah in the universe, the more his heart will be filled with veneration and awe of Allah. Hence Allah calls us to examine these signs and reflect on them as He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith],

And in yourselves. Then will you not see?} [adh-Dhariyat 51:20-21].

Qatadah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Whoever reflects on his own self will realise that the only reason why his joints are flexible is so that he can worship Allah.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]} [al-An'am 6:75].

This indicates that reflecting on the signs of Allah in the universe increases faith and certainty.

Imam Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi al-Maliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded us to look at His signs and reflect on His creation in many verses of the Qur'an. He wanted us to increase in certainty thereby and make us more steadfast in affirming His oneness.

Ibn al-Qaasim narrated that Maalik said: It was said to Umm ad-Darda': how did Abu'd-Darda' spend his time? She said: Most of the time he would reflect and ponder. It was said to him: Do you think reflection is a good deed? He said: Yes; it is certain faith.

Ibn al-Musayyib was asked about praying between Zuhr and 'Asr.

He said: That is not worship; rather worship is refraining from that which Allah has prohibited, and thinking and reflecting about the commands of Allah.

Al-Hasan said: Reflecting for an hour is better than voluntary prayer at night (qiyam al-layl)."*(Ahkam al-Qur'an 2/351)*.

3. One of the means by which a person can increase his faith, turn to Allah, may He be exalted, and find joy and comfort in worshipping Him is looking at the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon him in his own self, his family and his wealth, for that will generate love, prompt gratitude and make worship easy for him.

The more a person's love for his Lord increases, the more he will find pleasure in worship.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The lover finds pleasure in serving his beloved, and doing all kinds of acts obedience to him. The stronger the love grows, the more perfect the pleasure of obeying and serving him will be. So let him measure his faith and love for Allah by this standard, and let him see whether he finds pleasure in serving Him as the lover finds pleasure in serving his beloved, or does he find it burdensome and when he does it, he finds it tedious and boring, and feels resentment? This is the measure of a person's faith and love for Allah.

One of the righteous early generations said: I start to pray, and I feel distressed when I realise it will come to an end.

Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "My delight has been made in prayer." Whoever finds delight in a thing will not like to finish it or leave it, for he finds delight and comfort when he finds joy in worship and he has pleasure in his life.

One of the early generations said: I rejoice when night comes, because of what I find of pleasure in the night and I delight in conversing with the One Whom I love, focusing on worshipping Him and humbling myself before Him.

And I feel distressed when dawn breaks, because during the day I am distracted from that.

Nothing is more pleasurable to the lover than serving and obeying his beloved.

One of them said: I struggled with prayer for twenty years, then I enjoyed it for twenty years.

This pleasure and delight in service is only attained by means of persistence, despite struggling with it and feeling tired in the beginning. So if a person persists patiently and is sincere in his patience, that will lead to him finding this pleasure.

Abu Yazid said: I drove my nafs (self) weeping on the path to Allah and I kept driving it until it began to follow the path willingly and joyfully.

The one who continues doing acts of worship and striving in the way of Allah will be exposed to troubles and problems, and he will give up sometimes and feel tired sometimes, until he reaches this state [of enjoying worship].

At that time, he will find pleasure in his striving in worship, and he will feel anguish when he slows down or stops. So you will see that the most difficult thing for him is wasting his time or ceasing his striving.

And there is no way that he can attain that level unless he has strong love for Allah." (*Tariq al-Hijratayn* 2/697-698), 'Alam al-Fawa'id edn.

4. One of the greatest means of attaining divine help is asking of Allah, may He be exalted, and turning to Him. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught Mu'adh to say: "*Allahumma a'ini 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni 'ibadatika* (O Allah, help me to remember You, be grateful to You and worship You properly)."

Abu Dawud (1522) and an-Nasa'i (1303) narrated from Mu'adh ibn Jabal that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took him by the hand and said: "O Mu'adh, by Allah I love you. I advise you, O Mu'adh, do not fail to say following every prayer: '*Allahumma a'ini 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni 'ibadatika* (O Allah, help me to remember You, be grateful to You and worship You properly).'"

5. You should realize that in addition to all of that, you must strive, persist and have patience, for whoever strives and struggles will find pleasure in worship.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, persevere and endure and be on the alert and fear Allah that you may be successful} [Al 'Imran 3:200]

{And those who strive for Our sake - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good} [al-'Ankaboot 29:69].

Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir said: I strove against my nafs for forty years until I forced it to adhere to the straight path.

Thabit al-Bunani said: I struggled to make myself pray qiyam al-layl for twenty years, then I found pleasure in it for twenty years.

6. One of the greatest means that will help a person to remedy that problem is to treat a thing with its opposite. So if someone is stingy, the way to deal with it is striving to make himself give, be generous with what he has and give up stinginess, little by little. Whoever is cowardly, the remedy is training himself to be patient and courageous, and making himself speak the truth and act in accordance with it, and put up with the consequences of

doing so. Whoever is talkative, talks too much and indulges in false speech should restrain his tongue, rein it in and watch what he says.

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whatever I have of wealth I will never withhold from you. Whoever strives to maintain his dignity (by not asking of people), Allah will help him to maintain his dignity; whoever strives to be patient, Allah will bestow patience upon him; whoever acts as if he has no need of other people, Allah will suffice him. And no one is ever given anything better and more abundant than patience.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (6470) and Muslim (1053).

It was narrated that Abu’ d-Darda’ said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Knowledge is only acquired by learning and forbearance is only attained by striving to show forbearance. Whoever seeks what is good will be granted it, and whoever seeks protection against evil will be protected against it.”

Narrated by at-Tabarani in *al-Awsat* (2663) and others; classed as hasan by al-Albani.

7. Another means of attaining that is refraining from sins and acts of disobedience, for they form a barrier between a person and his Lord, and they are among the causes of being deprived of provision and goodness.

A man said to Ibrahim ibn Adham: I cannot pray qiyam al-layl; prescribe a remedy for me.

He said: Do not disobey Allah during the day and He will cause you to stand before Him during the night. Standing before Allah in the night is one of the greatest honours, and the disobedient sinner is not deserving of that honour.

A man said to al-Hasan al-Basri: O Abu Sa’id, when I go to bed I feel that I am in good health and I would like to pray qiyam al-layl, and I prepare water for my wudu’. Why am I not able to get up?

Al-Hasan said: Your sins are holding you back.

And he said (may Allah have mercy on him): If a person commits sin, he will be deprived of praying qiyam at night and fasting during the day as a result.

Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad said: If you cannot get up to pray qiyam at night and fast during the day, then you should realize that you have been deprived and shackled; your sins have shackled you.

8. Another thing that will help one to do acts of worship and make them easier is reading of what Allah has prepared for those who worship Him of immense reward; reading the biographies of the righteous; and finding out about the worship of those who love Allah. See: *at-Tarhib wa't-Tarhib* by al-Mundhiri; *al-Matjar ar-Rabih fi Thawab al-'Amal as-Salih* by ad-Dimyati; *Sifat as-Safwah* by Ibn al-Jawzi; and *Siyar A'lam an-Nubala'* by adh-Dhahabi.

We ask Allah to help and guide us and you.

And Allah knows best.