

WORSHIP IN ISLAM (PART 3 OF 3): THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF WORSHIP

Rating: 4.6

Description: The entire life of a Muslim transformed into worship, and a return to the original state of harmony with all, the Creator and the created.

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By: Imam Mufti

Published on: 06 Mar 2006

Last modified on: 25 Jun 2019

As mentioned earlier, the definition of worship in Islam is one which is comprehensive, including everything a person perceives, thinks, intends, feels, says and does. It refers to everything that God requires, external, internal or interactive. This includes rituals as well as beliefs, work, social activities, and personal behavior.

There is a distinction between that which is good, that which is evil and that which is neutral. A good thing is that which is according to the purposes and nature made by God. It leads to harmony and is, therefore, a reward in itself because it removes conflict and suffering. It follows that anything that accords with this must be a form of worship.

This Islamic understanding of worship allows the whole of one's life to be an act of worship, as long as the objective of that life is the pleasure of God, which is achieved by doing good and refraining from evil. A person can turn everyday activities into acts of worship by purifying his or her intention and sincerely seeking God's pleasure through these activities. God's Messenger, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"Helping a person or his belongings onto his mount is an act of charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken on the way to performing prayers is charity. Removing an obstacle from the road is charity." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Earning a living can be a form of worship. The Companions saw a man and were astonished by his hard work and industry. They lamented: "If he were only doing this much work for the sake of God..."

God's Messenger said:

"If he is working to support his small children, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to support his elderly parents, then it is for the sake of God. If he is working to occupy himself and keep his desires in check, then it is for the sake of God. If, on

the other hand, he is doing so to show off and earn fame, then he is working for the sake of Satan." (al-Mundhiri, as-Suyuti)

Even the most natural acts can become acts of worship if they are accompanied by the proper intention: God's Messenger said:

"When one of you approaches his wife, it is an act of charity." (Saheeh Muslim)

The same can be said for of eating, sleeping, working and traits of good character, such as truthfulness, honesty, generosity, courage, and humbleness, can become worship through sincere intention and deliberate obedience to God.

In order for these otherwise mundane actions to be counted as acts of worship deserving of divine reward, the following conditions must be met:

A. The action must be accompanied by the proper intention. God's Messenger said:

"Actions are but by intentions, and a person gets only what he intended." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

B. The action must be lawful in and of itself. If the action is something prohibited, its perpetrator deserves punishment. God's Messenger said:

"God is pure and good, and He accepts only what is pure and good." (Saheeh Muslim)

C. The dictates of Islamic Law must be completely observed. Deception, oppression, and iniquity must be avoided. God's Messenger said:

"He who deceives us is not one of us." (Saheeh Muslim)

D. The activity should not keep the person from performing his or her religious obligations. God says:

"O you who believe, do not let your wealth and children distract you from the remembrance of God..." (Quran 63:9)

As we see here, the concept of worship in Islam is not restricted to mere monasticism, meditation, or acknowledging the reality in which God has created us, nor is it one based upon mere ritualism and performance of certain actions with no apparent meanings. Rather Islam has combined the inner and the outer and has defined righteousness and placed for it a reward. It is this comprehensiveness of the concept of worship through which humans may fulfill the purpose for which they have been created. God says:

"And I have neither created jinn nor humans, except for My worship." (Quran 51:56)

Humans are required to live not according to their subjective desires, automatisms, mental conditioning or according to the dictates of social, political or academic authorities, but in accordance with their cosmic purpose inherent in us: the worship of God.

"So direct your face towards the straight religion, the nature (framed by) God with which He has created humankind. No change let there be in the creation of God, that is the straight religion, but most people do not know." (Quran 30:30)

When one lives their life fulfilling those aspects which God has commanded, leaving those things which God has forbidden, and according each of their actions to the Will of God, their life, from morning until evening, from the time of birth until death, is turned into worship for which they will be rewarded. This was the state of the Prophets, as God says:

"Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for God, the Lord of the all that exists." (Quran 6:162)

When one achieves this state, they come into harmony with the rest of creation and return to their natural state of being, as all others of the creations of God are unconsciously in constant worship of God, as He has said:

"Do you not see that unto God bow down in worship (or submit in service and adoration) whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts, and many among mankind..." (Quran 22:18)

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