

Using Your Heart to Pray for Yourself and Others

Bismillah er Rahman er Rahim, [In the Name of Allah, the One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy] All praise belongs to Allah. He owns everything. All power belongs to Him and not to us. May His peace and blessings be on His Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

On many Saturday online *sohbets*, Shaykh Taner reads from his books. On Saturday, July 17, Shaykh Taner read the seventh chapter of Ahmed er Rifai's *Guidance to Mysticism in Grand Masters of Sufism*, "*Amri bil Ma'ruf Wa Nahyi Anil-Munkar*." Shaykh Taner explains: "This subject '*Amri bil Ma'ruf Wa Nahyi Anil-Munkar*', which means in our terms: Support the positive and reject the negative. Help the people who are doing good and try to stop the bad. This is one of the things that is understood the least and applied wrongly especially by conservative Muslims and *alims* and *mawlanas*."

After reading the chapter and giving commentary on it, Shaykh Taner responds to student questions:

Student: Is it true in every situation, even among nonbelievers that we should forbid indecency and enjoin righteousness?

Shaykh: Of course, because this is a community matter. As a community and as a race, we are responsible to Allah. If something wrong is happening in your community and you are not doing anything about it, you will also get the punishment that the community will suffer. What can you do? You cannot start shooting people or telling people what to do, but if it is a common wrong, you have options, especially in the United States. Everybody can write to the newspaper; everybody can write to his or her congressman, saying this is wrong. During wartime, for example, many people are out there protesting the war. But you don't go around checking you neighbor for what's right or what's wrong. If you see your friend doing something wrong, your friend can take criticism, and you may tell him. But that's it. Don't try to be anyone's boss. Don't force anybody to do anything, just oppose the unjust action.

Ya Hadi Ya Haqq

If people break the law, there is a consequence. It's the police's job to catch the wrongdoer, not yours. You can show opposition from your heart. You pray for these people, saying, "*Ya Hadi Ya Haqq*," wishing them guidance and wishing them the truth. Every day you have to pray for your family, for the world. After every *zikr* we pray for the world. It is not that people are not going to do wrong; they are going to do wrong, so that Allah can teach them what is right. How does Allah guide people? By each other, by angels, by Himself, through Himself, through books, through life, through happenings, through punishments, through rewards. So what is our part? Our part is, as Allah says to his Prophet (pbuh): give the message and pray for them. You can tell somebody he is doing wrong, you can call the authorities that something is being wronged, and then pray for them, "O Allah, please show him the right way and make him act with it." He can see the right way but he may not act. So that's why, "*Ya Hadi, Ya Haqq, Ya Hadi, Ya Haqq*." Then you say, "Please help him to see what he's doing wrong and correct it." If you haven't tackled your *nafs*, don't do anything, except what is apparent. First correct yourself and accept the truth and act with the truth, so you can tell your neighbor, "Accept the truth and act with it." There are things you can do, there are things you cannot do. That is why you need to give the message and pray. Our job is simple. Allah says, "You cannot guide them; I guide them."

— Shaykh Taner Ansari

— From the Online Saturday Sohbet,
July 17, 2010

How did our Prophet (pbuh) and Hz Ali (ra) correct people?

When living within a community, you may see an action by someone that needs correcting. Your Shaykh has commented, “You should be soft and kind [as our Prophet and Hz. Ali were]. You should not be trying to find someone’s mistakes so you can correct them. This is not your job.” Let’s say you are working with other people. Now why should you be soft and kind, even when you don’t have to? What is the advantage of being soft and kind? If there weren’t an advantage to this, our Prophet (pbuh) would not have set such an example. As Sufis, we should ask ourselves: it may be pleasing to Allah, but how does it benefit us to be soft and kind?

1. You create — to the best of your ability — positivity.
2. When you are talking about a subject, maybe the person will hear it better, rather than responding to the negativity.
3. They won’t think you are trying to put them down, but rather that you are not happy with what is happening.

How to be more like the Prophet (pbuh)

Now we all have our own style. Some of us come across stronger when we are trying to correct others. We are always working on saying things in a nicer way, so that the person hears the message. But what is the benefit to us? We don’t want to be viewed as brittle or cruel, because that is not our intention. For Allah’s sake, you intend to be a better person. As soon as you have this intention, what will Allah do? If you take a step to Allah, He’s going to walk to you. So you also create positive energy for yourself when you think of Allah’s pleasure and are soft and kind. No matter how much we fail or succeed in this, the point is always, “What can I learn out of what is happening, so that I can get closer to Allah?”

Perform *amri bil-ma’ruf wa nahyi ‘anil-munkar* (the condition of enjoining righteousness, or what is fair and equitable, and forbidding indecency, or what is morally repugnant) according to your means and station. The part [from Chapter Seven of Ahmed er Rifai’s book “*Guidance to Mysticism*” in *Grand Masters of Sufism*, Ansari Publications, 2008] that I would like to expand upon a bit is why should we don’t go around and check for everyone’s faults?

1. You don’t have time to concentrate this much on other people. Our first job as Sufis is to concentrate on ourselves and find out what we are doing that is stopping us from getting closer to Allah, not what other people are doing wrong. What we are doing wrong is going to make us further away from Allah. If we learn from that, then that is what is going to get us closer to Allah, *inshallah*.
2. You should mind your own business and use your heart. For Sufis, the heart is most important. Why is the heart important? Because Allah resides in your heart, because your connection to Allah is in your heart.

How do you promote good manners?

First, we should forbid indecency and enjoin righteousness. Your Shaykh says, “You set the example yourself.” Those of us who have children know quite well that you cannot swear at home and expect your kids not to swear. There are those of us with double standards: I can do it, but my child should not. That’s not how Allah wants us to be. For Allah, there is only one standard.

Prayers of the Heart

What should we do when talking to people and we see them going down the wrong path, or we

see something wrong? We use prayers of the heart. How does your heart change the situation?

1. *Ya Hadi Ya Mumin*. We repeat these prayers because they work. If somebody starts getting on your nerves, for yourself and that person, you start making *zikr* in your heart: “*Ya Hadi, Ya Mumin*.”
2. If they are ignorant: “*Ya Alim, Ya Hakim*”.
3. If they lack love and they are really harsh: “*Ya Wadud, Ya Salam*”.
4. If they lack kindness: “*Ya Latif*”.
5. If they are lazy: “*Ya Muqtadir, Ya Qadir*”.

I would like to give you an assignment. Find the person who gets on your nerves the most, and pray while you are talking to them. Whatever comes to your heart, pray for them with Allah’s Names. I have seen really positive and wonderful changes this way. Start with your kids. Then do it in the office. Work on yourself. You must pray for yourself as you are going through whatever is driving you crazy. Actually, what is happening is your *nafs* is driving you crazy. With your heart, whenever you think that what you’re going through is too harsh: “*Ya Latif, Ya Latif, Ya Latif*”, and Patience: “*Ya Sabur*”.

— Shaykha Muzeyyen Ansari
— From the online Saturday Sohbet,
July 17, 2010

Ramadan Mubarak

This article is excerpted from Call of Divine August 2009.

The Turkish Calendar

We follow the Turkish calendar. The Turks have an accurate way of detecting the moon through their observatory, so that they know exactly when the moon will be in its place, without trying to spot it with the naked eye, whether there are clouds or not. Since we have the technology, we should use it because we can trust it. You will be informed of the beginning and end of Ramadan through this means.

Fasting in Ramadan

Allah said, “When you fast, you are closest to Me.” Allah doesn’t eat. You don’t eat. When you fast, what are you doing? You’re fighting against your biggest motives, like hunger, sex, domination, self-preservation. If you can master over these things at will, then you will have a good tool against your *nafs*. Your *nafs* uses all these things to attract attention to itself and dominate over you. If you can, please fast the whole month of Ramadan. If you can’t fast the whole month, then fast as much as you can. If you can’t fast, then diet, minimize your food intake. If you are unable to fast, you must pay something to feed the poor, enough to sustain a person in one day. In the United States, we pay between \$3 to \$5 per day. Pay what you can. If you are sick or traveling, do not fast. Don’t be a hero and try to fast during these times. Allah is not looking for heroes. Allah is looking for people in order to allow His light to shine through them. When you are a hero, you are with you. Allah is looking for people who want to surrender and let Allah be there.

If you are menstruating or nursing, you don’t have to fast.

In *Sura 24, Ayat 38*, Allah says that he is going to look at the best of what you did and reward you. In Ramadan, the most important thing, is to control your *nafs*. When you are hungry, your patience diminishes. Since you are trying to be a Sufi, you have to practice your patience when you are hungry. You have to manifest peace when you are hungry. Hold on to your anger when you are hungry. Be good to people, speak less, avoid confrontation. If somebody bothers you while you are fasting, tell them you are fasting and turn away. The purpose of the fasting is to give

you an excuse to get closer to Allah and to be thankful. When you take food and water away temporarily, you appreciate it much more. Allah is *Razzaq*. He nourishes us spiritually and materially.

Zakat in Ramadan

Pay the poor due, zakat, *zakat'el fitr* which is 1/40th of your income which you have in excess, that which you did not spend.

Breaking the Fast

Break fast with water and dates, then pray. Then eat the meal or try the Pakistani way. First start with appetizers and one or two hours later eat the meal. (If you are living in countries closer to the poles where the light is extra long, you may fast by the hour: summer 12 hours, winter 8 hours.)

Sahur

These are suggestions. It is good to get up and eat a light breakfast. Don't go to bed after, but keep reciting *Suratul-Ikhlās* until the morning prayer. Do the morning prayer, then go back to bed if you can.

The Night of Power

The assumed night of power is the 27th of Ramadan, but it is not the same day every year. The suggested Night of Power is one of the last 10 days of Ramadan and on one of the odd days. We will tell you as soon as we know. In case some of you receive the information after the Night of Power because of the time difference in the different countries, then celebrate each of the suggested nights as the Night of Power.

New Students

Go for it! Experience Ramadan and find out what happens.

Ramadan Mubarak!

Prayers for Children

To make your children more interested in communicating with you and in being guided, you need to pray for them. You have to make *rabita* to their hearts and repeat 33 times, 66 times, 101 times, or any number of times you choose:

- *Lailaha ilallah, Lailaha ilallah, Lailaha ilallah.*
- *Ya Hadi, Ya Hadi, Ya Hadi* (Oh Guide).
- *Ya Alim, Ya Hakim*, so they will be wise (O Knower of All, O Wise One).
- *Ya Mu'min*, so they will be believers (O Believer).
- *Ya Muqtadir, Ya Qadir*, so they will have the power to do (O All Powerfull One, O Creator of All).
- *Ya Qawi, Ya Matin*, so they will be strong (*Muqim*), enduring for the work that Allah gives

them (O Strong One, O Enduring One).

- *Ya Muhaymin, Ya Hafiz*, for their protection (O Guardian, O Preserver).
- *Ya Shafi*, for their health.
- *Ya Fattah, Ya Razzaq, Ya Karim, Ya Wahhab* for their support (O Opener, O Provider, O Generous One, O Giver/Bestower).
- *Ya Ghani, Ya Mani* (O Rich One, O Preventer).
- *Ya Wadud, Ya Salaam*, so that they will be peaceful among each other (O Love, O Peace).
- *Ya Sabur, Ya Latif* (O Patient One, O Subtle One/ Soft One).

You can also create your own prayers, using the Names of Allah.

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