

**Al-Tazkiyah (Inner-Self  
Purification) – Essential for  
Success**



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Allah (SWT) said:

***And whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his soul;  
and the destination (of all) is to Allah. Qur'an, 35:18***

A significant portion of building the Muslim personality comes from the fundamental Islamic source, *al Tazkiyah* or the purification of the heart and soul. Through *tazkiyah* comes spiritual health and morality. The traits of the loving of Allah and His Prophets, adorning and practicing the ninety-nine attributes of Allah, applying the virtues of compassion and mercy, holding one's brother or sister's well-being higher than one's self, generosity, piousness, trustworthiness and more are consequent virtues of *tazkiyah*.

## **The Place of al Tazkiyah in the Sight of Allah**

Reminders of the following verses of Surah Abasa or Frowned and the review of their story will help to better understand the place of *tazkiyah* to Allah (SWT). Allah said:

***(The Prophet) frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man [interrupting].  
But what could tell you [O Muhammad] that perchance he might grow in spiritual understanding,  
yazzakka?  
Or that he might receive [mental] admonition and that the teaching might benefit him? As for he  
who thinks for  
himself as self-sufficient [about a member of Quraysh whom the Prophet had hoped to bring to  
Islam], to him,***

***you give attention and not to you [is any blame] if he does not grow in spiritual understanding, yazzakka.***

The story in the above verses infers that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was speaking to an influential member of Quraysh whom he had hoped to enlighten with Islam. During the conversation, a companion of the Prophet, who was blind (Abdallah ibn Umm Maktum), approached the Prophet interrupting him, seeking tazkiyah, spiritual gain and guidance. The Prophet frowned and turned his face away from Abdallah. In response to the Prophet's action, Allah revealed the Chapter of Abasa, instructing the Prophet not to be distracted by anyone seeking tazkiyah. Aside from the lesson learned to withhold no spiritual admonition from anyone finding it, is also to realize the unique and prestigious position that Allah placed upon tazkiyah.

Tazkiyah is one of the spiritual goals of the Islamic faith. This fact, uncovered, as Allah taught His Prophet "the no frowning lesson." In the first instance, for example, Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad:

***But what could tell you [O Muhammad] that perchance he [the blind man] might grow in spiritual understanding (yazzakka).***

This questioning of the Prophet over his delivery of "tazkiyah" to the blind man is clear evidence showing that "tazkiyah" holds a crucial place and value to Allah (SWT). In the second instance, in a similar manner to the first example, Allah questions the Prophet's delivery of tazkiyah persistently to the arrogant person.

***As for he who thinks for himself as self-sufficient, to him, you give attention and not to you [is any blame] if he did not grow in spiritual understanding, yazzakka.***

In those two instances, the heavy demand of Allah centered on tazkiyah and the manner in which the Prophet is delivering it. Thus, there is an undeniable indication of the magnitude and significance of tazkiyah to Allah and therefore in the Islamic faith and Muslim's daily living. If tazkiyah is so central and dear to Allah, a believer must undoubtedly act earnestly and industriously to attain it by seeking closeness to Allah in conducting thikr, night prayers, reading, understanding and applying the words of the Qur'an. Those who desire to be loved by Allah and attain the success in this world and the Hereafter must grow and never cease to observe and practice tazkiyah. This fact becomes very plain as Allah makes His claim over tazkiyah in the following verses:

***Truly he succeeds who (zakkaha) purifies it (i.e., nafs, the soul or inner-self). And he fails who corrupts it.***

Preceding these two crucial verses, Allah, seven times, swore emphasizing the culminating promise that it is tazkiyah that plays a significant role in the success of the believer. Below is the English translation of Verses 1 through 10 of Surah al-Shams (91)

***"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendor;  
By the Moon, as she follows him;  
By the day as it reveals (the Sun's) glory;  
By the Night as it conceals it;  
By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure;  
By the Earth and its (wide) expanse;  
By the Nafs (Soul),  
And the proportion and order given to it and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right  
Truly he succeeds who purifies it  
And he fails who corrupts it!"***

Ibn Abbas narrated that when the Messenger of Allah read this verse (Truly he succeeds who purifies it and he fails who corrupts it!), he used to stop reciting and say:

***O Allah, give to my inner-self (nafsi) piety (taqwa), for You are its Guardian and its Master and the best Purifier. -Bukhari and Muslim***

The messengers of Allah, the learned men, and women who are rich in spirituality, piety, and guidance are the teachers who help people attain tazkiyah.

## The Remembrance of Allah, Thikru Allah

One of the most important constituents of tazkiyah is thikru Allah (remembrance of Allah). Thikru Allah or thikr is a term used to reflect a collection of ways in which a Muslim remembers, lives and attains closeness to Allah in his heart and himself. The word, remember, alone does not reflect the meaning of thikr. Thus, thikr is more than the recollection of something in memory. Thikr is a training institution that helps people develop enlightened hearts, wholly occupied with Allah and His attributes. Allah has told us:

***Say (O Muhammad) Truly, Allah leaves to stray whom He will (as a result of their choice of going astray) but He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in repentance, those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah, for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest. Qur'an, 13:27-28***

Furthermore, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said:

***The faith of a servant (worshipper) will not be right, complete and straight (yastaqeeem) unless his heart, straightened (yastaqeeem, i.e., wholly engaged in loving Allah, lovingly obedient to Allah and hateful of disobeying Him).***

Shaddad ibn Aws reported that in the salah (prayer) the Prophet (PBUH) used to ask Allah for a heart in awe of Him, free from the distress and agitation of sin, saying:

***I ask You, (O Allah) for a good heart. -Musnad Ahmad***

The ninety-nine noble attributes of Allah are heavenly spiritual enrichment. Each noble attribute is an institution that speaks about Allah. A true believer loves Allah more than anything else. Therefore, these noble attributes will allow a person to be trustworthy, honorable, wise, beneficent, successful, humble and in awe of Allah. As a result of this knowledge and close attendance to Allah, righteous acts become natural in a person, and evil acts become infrequent. These results naturally come from the reflections and deep knowledge of Allah and His attributes.

A Muslim can accomplish change in his heart through the mechanism of thikr. Allah offers a variety of means to achieve piety, tranquility, humility, and reverence. One way to begin making thikr is to start out by attaching your heart to Allah and by linking it to His guidance. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

***Truly in the body, there is a morsel of flesh, and if it is guided (to the way of Allah), the whole body will be guided and follow accordingly, and if this organ is left to go astray, the whole body will follow and go astray; indeed this (organ) is the heart. -Muslim***

When the heart is cleansed of all vices and enlightened by the guidance of Allah, the rest of the body and all its senses will follow accordingly. Furthermore, the Prophet (PBUH) pointed out the importance of the role of faith in the heart, when he said:

***Verily, faith in your hearts wears out, just as clothes do. So ask Allah to renew faith in your hearts.***

Abu Dawood, al Nissa'i, and Ibn Majah in their Masanid (Records of Prophetic Traditions), respectively reported that Abu Sa'eed al Khidri quoted the Prophet (PBUH) as saying:

***If a man, during the night, wakes up his wife and then they conduct two rak'ah, (a prayer unit) they are considered (in terms of rewards and honor) for that night amongst the people of thikr, 'al thakereen and al thakirat'. -Al-Tabari***

Thikr utilizes the signs of Allah and His creations as means of recollection and contemplation. The attributes: the Merciful, the Wise, the Pure, the Able, the King, the Cherisher, the Gracious, the Exalted, the Dominion, and the Master are a few from which the spiritual nourishment of a pious believer drawn. There are more signs the Qur'an often alludes to which a believer contemplates.

The universe, for example, is one of them. Modern science tells us that it is over one hundred and fifty billion light years wide. This vast universe holds over one hundred billion galaxies, each with billions of stars and planets. There are an eternal creation and destruction of new stars and planets. This astronomical phenomenon could illustrate Judgment Day and the end of our world. In addition, signs such as the creation of people, animals, the world and the physical and intellectual relationships existing within all this creation are indicators and signs of His Majesty, Wisdom, and Greatness. Allah's signs are present everywhere:

His beautiful attributes are witnessed and abide in each tiny atom of matter; they abide throughout the entire immeasurable universe. Contemplating the universe can also remind us of some other signs of Allah, such as Heaven and Hell and the Hereafter.

There are over seventy-five verses in the Holy Qur'an that speak about thikr, separately by name. These verses speak of and reflect on this subject in a variety of ways. Moreover, there are hundreds of other places where implication denotes thikr through glorification and reflection. Below are some examples:

***Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts may thus understand (and learn wisdom), and their ears may thus hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts. Qur'an, 22:46***

***On earth are signs for those of assured faith, as also in your own selves. Will you not then see? Qur'an, 51:20 and 21***

***Is it not a warning to such people (to call to mind) how many generations before them We destroyed in those haunts where they (now) move? Verily, in this are signs for people endued with understanding. Qur'an, 20:128***

***If We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily, you would have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder in awe of Allah. Such are the analogies that We propound to people, so that they may reflect. Qur'an, 59:21***

***So when you have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praise of Allah, as you used to celebrate the praises of your fathers, yea, with far more heart and soul. Qur'an, 2:200***

***(O reader!), bring your Lord to remembrance in your (very) soul, with humility, and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not yourself of those who are unheedful. Qur'an, 7:202***

This is a heart soothing and culminating verse. I believe every Muslim should, on a daily basis, hold a silent, personal, hearty, self-accountability meeting with Allah, morning and evening, to share the concern of Allah that this verse speaks of. Muslims should make this verse a daily practiced sunnah. One must understand that thikrul Allah is not just about moving the lips and the tongue with the praises of Allah with an absent mind and heart. Thikru Allah is a beautiful feeling and deep satisfaction produced when a person conducts thikr with a complete concentration of one's heart and mind.

***But keep in remembrance the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly. Qur'an, 7:8***

***Oh, you who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If any do so, the loss is their own. Qur'an, 63:9***

There are many more forms of thikr: prayers during the night, supplication, meditation, and contemplation, as well as reading and studying the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). Thikr increases faith, enlightens our inner-selves, brings people closer to Allah, and yields tranquility and joy in the heart. Self-satisfaction and comfort can be actualized only when a person maintains Allah in his or her heart and pleases Him. Allah reveals:

***Undoubtedly, believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts tremble and when they hear His verses rehearsed, find their faith strengthened and put (all) their trust in their Lord. Qur'an, 8:2***

This kind of deep faith in Allah will result in less inclination to use the world simply to collect money and achieve power. Thikru Allah is a primary ingredient in making a true believer who epitomizes all moral virtues (husnu al khuluq). Triumph and prosperity in life are directly related to the degree of practice of the virtues of this school of spiritual guidance, tazkiyah. Almighty God said:

***But the ultimate success (falah or prosperity in the highest sense) is for the one who purifies oneself (in spiritual guidance) and remembers (glorifies and meditates on) the name of one's Guardian Lord (to enhance one's spirituality) and then performs the prayer (salah). Qur'an, 87:14-***

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Trust is certainly a minimum requirement for having a successful business. Tazkiyah, however, is the foundation not only of trust but also benevolent and honest relations. Thikru Allah is the cornerstone for loving Allah and practicing the virtues and traits of His attributes. Thikru Allah clears away all corruption and mischief and this is truly the gateway to prosperity.

Furthermore, prophet Muhammad told us in a hadith Qudsi (words of inspiration from Allah, expressed by the mind and tongue of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

***I am in the Company of my servant as long as he remembers Me and his lips move because of his remembrance of Me. -Musnad Ahmad***

What better company could one wish for? Muslims tend to go so deeply into their business affairs that the worldly ones become a hindrance to worshipping Allah and seeking tazkiyah for their hearts. There is no justification for allowing business or family affairs to obstruct the spiritual development of tazkiyah. An example of this is related to the Holy Qur'an. Allah said in Surah al Fat-h (the Opening):

***The desert Arabs who lagged behind will say to you: 'we were engaged in (looking after) our flocks and herds and our families; do then ask forgiveness for us.' They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Qur'an, 48:11***

Obligations, including prayers, are the means to accomplish thikru Allah, as Allah ordained:

***And establish regular prayer for remembering (praising) Me. Qur'an, 20:14***

Even pilgrimage (hajj) is designed to accomplish thikr. Following, Allah says:

***And proclaim the pilgrimage among men; they will come to you on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways, so that they may witness the benefits (provided) for them and celebrate the name of Allah through the days appointed. Qur'an, 22:27-28***

This is just a brief discussion on the importance of tazkiyah and thikru Allah in Islam. This matter is often neglected in the lives of many Muslims, especially today. For those who seek to tread the way of the prophet (PBUH), it is incumbent on them to adapt their lives to include this spiritual component. This, in turn, contributes to the purification of inner-self, tazkiyah, one of the essential fundamentals of Islamic development and the well-being of mankind. Just as the body needs food to stay healthy, the soul too needs its spiritual nourishment. Muslims today must earnestly consider tazkiyah as the number one priority in their lives.