

Finding Peace in a Turbulent World (Part 2)

Self-Development & The Impact of Faith on Inner Peace

A believer's inner feelings towards life, like contentment, patience and thankfulness, are crucial for finding inner peace.

Part 1 of this article listed a number of reminders for dealing with the practical side of life and ways to increase in inner peace when dealing with the external environment.

The second part of the article highlights the positive impact of faith on inner peace, with reflections on how a Muslim increases in peace through self-development and a stronger faith.

1- Sincere Intentions

The key for any good deed in Islam is having a pure intention, and being sincere for the sake of Allah. Sincerity in dealing with other people is very important, but it is even more important in a believer's relation with God. Sincerity of intention is the basis of how our actions will be judged by Allah, as only God knows our true intentions.

God only accepts sincere actions which are purely for His sake, and these are the ones which bring us closer to Him and increase us in inner peace. Anything we do or say to show-off, (like showing-off knowledge, generosity, prayers, piety, ... etc), will be rejected on the Day of Judgment, and won't bring real benefit, neither to our level of faith, nor to our feeling of peace.

As no one is perfect, we can all make an effort to improve and refine our intentions, and get rid of any hypocrisy we may have in our hearts, in order to increase in faith and come closer to Allah. Remember that God sees each thing we do and hears each word we say and knows what is in our hearts, so don't even try to mix good intentions with bad ones, if you are searching for peace. Only sincere deeds will be accepted.

2- Seek Knowledge

Seeking knowledge is a high priority in Islam, for a number of reasons. On one hand it helps a Muslim understand the divine Guidance God has revealed for us to live a happy life here and in the hereafter. Getting to know Allah makes a believer come closer to Him, and this increases faith and inner peace.

On the other hand, knowledge helps us deal with doubts which Satan, man's worst enemy, tries to whisper to believers in order to make them deviate from the Straight Path of Allah. Satan has two main avenues to deviate the sons of Adam, either through doubts or through unlawful desires. By gaining knowledge, a Muslim can clear all doubts and refute all suspicious matters he may come across, thereby reaching peace of mind and a stronger faith.

But seeking knowledge also has other important benefits, as Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

“When a group of people assemble for the remembrance of Allah, the [angels](#) surround them (with their wings), (Allah's) mercy envelops them, sakinah, or tranquility descends upon them and Allah makes a mention of them before those who are near Him.” (Sahih Muslim)

When angels descend and surround people with their wings, a deep feeling of peace fills the hearts of believers, a feeling which is difficult to describe and can only be experienced. This tranquility makes one feel inner peace and contentment, and somehow all worries disappear.

This feeling may not last for long, as once one is out of the mosque and on the street we have to face real life again with all its problems, but going to the mosque on a regular basis and attending gatherings where the [Quran](#) is recited and Allah's name is mentioned helps one charge the spiritual batteries, and increase in peace.

3- Remember Allah

In order for the feeling of peace and tranquility to continue after leaving the mosque, a believer continues remembering Allah throughout the day and the rest of the week, by reading the Qur'an, praying at night when other people are asleep, and praising Allah especially before sunrise and before sunset.

A strong faith leads a believer to love Allah, his Creator, and when he loves Allah he remembers Him all, or most, of the time, when free and also when busy, when working and when resting, at all times of the day and night. And this continuous remembrance brings peace to the heart, as Allah describes it in the Qur'an: (... with the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace) (Ar-Ra'd, 13:28)

4- Remember the Hereafter

Nobody lives for ever, and remembering that this life is a transition, like a bridge we walk over to go from one side of the river to the other, is an important wake up call when one is too occupied with worldly matters.

This is an important reminder that helps self-development, as remembering the Hereafter is one of the six articles of faith. This world is a transition, so don't be fooled by its glitter, and don't be attached to its material aspects. Wealth, fame, power, beauty, cars, houses, ... etc. are the glitter of this world. A wise believer deals with those worldly matters with caution, making sure to be in control of them, and not allowing them to take over one's life.

If the love of these worldly matters take control of your heart, you will not have room left for the love of God. Money comes and goes, power comes and goes, so do all of the rest of these worldly matters. What really counts is faith and being close to God which leads to peace of mind, contentment and inner peace.

Remember also that all your deeds are recorded, so have [taqwa](#) (piety), and know that you will be held accountable for them on the Day of Judgment.

(So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.) (Az-Zalzalah, 99:7-8)

It is part of human nature to forget that we are on a journey to the Hereafter, but when we remember we come closer to God, and this reminder helps us regain the right balance and follow His Guidance.

5- Be Patient

The past can't be changed, no one knows the future, the length of your life and sustenance has already been decided, ... so submit to the will of God. Life has its ups and downs so be patient.

Patience is an important virtue which God loves, and is mentioned in the Qur'an in many verses. When faced with hardships, a believer should be patient and have faith in that all what happens in this life is by Allah's decree. Belief in qadar (measured destiny) is one of the important six articles of faith, and has a strong impact on how a believer acts in life, as Allah (SWT) said:

(Say, "Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon Allah let the believers rely.) (At-Tawbah, 9:51)

With this knowledge and certitude, a Muslim is patient and content with what Allah has decreed, knowing that after hardships come times of ease, as Allah promised in the Quran

(For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.) (Ash-Sharh, 94:5-6)

So if you go through a difficult time, like illness for example, remember that on the other side of the hardship itself there is an opportunity to strengthen your faith and to come closer to God, which leads to a higher level of inner peace.

6- Avoid Sins & When you Sin Repent Immediately

No one is sinless, and all people make mistakes, some are intentional sins and others not intentional. God loves those who repent when they sin.

A quick return to God's Path after sinning is very important, as delaying repentance makes it more difficult, as illustrated by this example:

When you finish a meal, if you immediately rinse the plates, they will be much easier to wash compared to say leaving them till the following day. Same here, repenting straight after a sin makes the return to God's Path much faster and much easier, and this makes the level of faith and closeness to God remain reasonably stable, which leads a believer not to lose his/her level of inner peace. Following a sin with a good deed for the sake of Allah helps erase it, as advised by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

7- Control Wealth and Don't Let it Control You

A believer finds inner peace from within, i.e. from the tranquility of his/her soul, not from external factors

A believer has faith that God is The Provider (Al-Razzak). He provides for all His creatures, and our provision (rizk) is part of our destiny which is determined before we were born.

What a believer is required to do is do his/her best effort to earn a lawful living, and part of a strong faith is to be certain that we will not earn more than what is written for us, and that at the

Based on this certitude, a believer controls wealth and does not let it control his life. Wealth and its love should therefore never be inside the heart, only in our hands (i.e. in our control). If it increases, we should not rejoice and if it decreases we should not be sad.

Accepting destiny (after doing one's best) is an important factor for finding inner peace and tranquility, so don't panic if your wealth decreases, and ask Allah for all your needs, He will answer you.

8- Be Thankful

Satisfaction is achieved when one is pleased with what Allah has ordained. When one distances himself from wanting what people have, and submits to the will of Allah, one will achieve pure satisfaction. Remember this hadith:

“Whoever spends his night safely in his home, with a healthy body and enough provision for his day, it is as if he has gained the world in its entirety” (At-Tirmidhi)

Every time I read or listen to this hadith and think of its words for a few moments, a feeling of peace enters the heart. There are many people around the world who are deprived of shelter, food, security and health, and we should be thankful for the many blessings we have.

What else does one really need from this world other than these three basics: security, health and provision? Thinking of what may or may not happen next year, or even next month, and worrying about it is not a wise position for a believer to take. Why?

First of all we don't know for sure whether we will be around next year. So why worry about something which may not be valid?

Second: A believer knows that God is The Provider. He will provide next year (if we are still here) as He has provided this year. Provision may be more or may be less, but at the end we trust that God will provide.

Third: As for good health, that is something beyond us. We thank God for the health He has bestowed on us, we do our best to preserve it by following a healthy lifestyle, and we ask Him to cure us if we are not well. After a certain age however, we know that it is normal for our general health condition to gradually decline till we reach old age. That is life: all creatures start young, mature then get old. We can't reverse the clock and we accept it as part of our journey in this life. So the best approach is to take this phase in life wisely without complaint, if we want to be content. Being content is an important key for inner peace, and we should thank God for what we have.

9- Do Your Best to be Among Those Whom Allah Loves

In order to find true happiness and inner peace, be one of those God loves, whom He mentioned in the Qur'an.

God loves those who are patient, those who are just, those who trust in Him and those who do good and those who seek perfection in their deeds. He also loves those who purify themselves, and those who repent to Him and have taqwa (piety) in their hearts.

By doing one's best to acquire these qualities, a believer comes closer to God through the door of love, and this is the highest level of inner peace.

Some Muslim scholars describe this stage as Paradise on earth.

Part 3 of the article will look in more detail at a believer's close relation with Allah ...

(To be continued In-Shaa-Allah ...)

[Finding Peace in a Turbulent World \(Part 1\) Inner Peace and the Practical Side of Daily Life](#)

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First published in April 2011.