

Tranquility of the Heart – Search for The Best Companions

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was reportedly asked: “Which of our companions are best?” He replied: “One whose appearance reminds you of God, and whose speech increases you in knowledge, and whose actions remind you of the hereafter.

Who do we spend the most time with? Chances are for many of us (especially if we are students), they are our friends. Friends are the people we share things with, talk to regularly, and experience a large part of our life with. This is why the Prophet said:

“A person is on the religion of his companion. Therefore let every one of you carefully consider the company he keeps.” (At-Tirmidhi)

While the previous article talked about something personal between us and God (prayer), an integral part to gaining tranquility of the heart is to be mindful of our surroundings and the people we spend most of our time with. Is it any wonder that we find our hearts perturbed, when it was reported that the Prophet said:

“Do not speak much without mentioning Allah, for too much speech without mentioning Allah hardens the heart, and the hard-hearted are the farthest of all people from Allah Most High.” (At-Tirmidhi)

We need to be mindful of this because part of the reason for our lack of devotion in prayer is precisely because the time spent between prayers is spent in heedlessness. While ablution and prayer wash away our minor sins, at times our hardened hearts prevent us from truly tasting the sweetness of prayer, due to the fact that we hardly remember God outside of prayer.

The Prophet reminds us of the importance of good company in this hadith:

“A good friend and a bad friend are like a musk or perfume-seller and a blacksmith: The perfume-seller might give you some perfume as a gift, or you might buy some from him, or at least you might smell its fragrance. As for the blacksmith, he might singe your clothes, and at the very least you will breathe in the fumes of the furnace.” (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Most of us know this hadith, but we rarely see it from the perspective of gaining tranquility of the heart. We may have amazing friends whom we have shared much with, yet we have not developed spiritually with them. When things go wrong in our life, we turn to people for advice but we are not reminded of God, the ultimate Source of Peace- as-Salaam.

Thus we need to try to create an environment. We can start with something simple, such as waking each other up for fajr (the pre-dawn prayer), or starting a book club by reading something about the Prophet.

If we start here, we could be of the people who are under the shade of God on the Day of Judgment, as the Prophet told us that one of the seven categories of people promised the shade of God are two persons who loved each other for the sake of God, got together, and departed on this basis. (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Good friends who prioritize their relationship with God will help us on the spiritual path. It is easier to pray and to do our everyday acts of worship because we have company to help us. Even when we face difficulties, these friends will support us; ultimately they will remind us of God during these tests and help us to rely on Him. No one is perfect, and this is why it is important to be around people who want to improve themselves, and in the process will help you to improve yourself too. Ibn Hazm stated: “Anyone who cares about your friendship is willing to criticize you, while those who make light of your faults show they do not care.”

God reminds us of this in the [Quran](#), when He says:

{And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them, desiring adornments of the worldly life, and do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever [in] neglect.} (Al-Kahf 18: 28)

Some of us face a problem – we would like to have such friends, but due to circumstances outside our control, we don't have that tight-knit group of people that help us on our path to God. Does that mean we will never be able to achieve tranquility of the heart? No, because God does not test us with more than we can bear, and truly we get what we intend.

The first thing we should try to do is be that friend to others. If we find that we do not have religious people around us, then we should try to influence our environment. This does not mean being over-bearing; rather, we should try to make our existing friendships more meaningful. The Lebanese poet, Khalil Gibran, said, “Let there be no purpose in friendship save the deepening of the spirit.” And the harder it is, the more our effort is appreciated by God.

Secondly, we should constantly seek avenues where we will meet such people. Whether it's at a local mosque, or driving for an hour to attend a talk, this effort on our part shows that we are serious in trying to follow the advice of the Prophet, and God will reward us for that.

Thirdly, du'aa is the key. We should never forget that when we recite the verses: {You alone do we worship, and You alone do we seek for help} (Al-Fatihah 1: 5) we are in essence reminding ourselves that we cannot do anything except through seeking the help of God. So if we truly desire good company, and friends who remind us of our purpose and of God, we should ask the one who possesses the hearts to bring us closer to hearts that remember Him often.

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