

“All praise be to Allah, the Cherisher & Sustainer of the Worlds!” (10:9-10)

### The Power of Persuasion

There is an old story about the Sun and the Wind arguing among themselves as to which of them was the strongest. They agreed to a contest to see who could most quickly get a man’s coat off his back.

The Wind went first. It tried to blow the coat off the man’s back. It sent its gale upon him full force. However, the stronger it blew, the more tightly the man clutched his coat about him against the force and chill of the gale. Finally, in despair, the Wind gave up.

Then it was the Sun’s turn. It showed itself to the man, gently bringing forth its light and warmth. And no sooner did the man see the Sun come out than he took off his coat happily and willingly.

Coercion and insistence are restrictive approaches that make people uncomfortable, argumentative, and resistant. Persuasion and dialogue, by contrast, go hand in hand with affability and friendship. They can lead to changing people’s opinions in an easy, pleasant and agreeable manner. Persuasion is the approach of those who are strong and correct. A person who takes this approach earns the respect and esteem of those who disagree with him, even if he does not manage to convince them of his point of view.

The Quran and Sunnah illuminate for us the importance of persuasion and emphasize to us its effectiveness. We can see how the verses of the Quran bring arguments and evidence and call towards contemplation.

“Have you not considered the one who – because Allah had given him power – disputed with Abraham about his Lord? Abraham said: ‘My Lord is He Who gives life and death.’ He said: ‘I give life and death.’ Abraham said: ‘But it is Allah who causes the Sun to rise from the east. Make it to rise from the west.’ Thus he who disbelieved was confounded. And Allah does not guide a people who are unjust.” [Sûrah al-Baqarah: 258]

“A believing man from Pharaoh’s people who had been concealing his faith said: ‘Will you slay a man simply because he says “My Lord is

Allah,” when he has indeed come to you with clear signs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, then it is upon him if he lies. But if he is telling the truth, then some of what he warns you about will befall you.’ Indeed Allah does not guide one who transgresses and lies.” [Sûrah Ghafir: 28]

We can see how wisely the Prophet (p) dealt with a young man who asked his permission to engage in fornication. The young man approached our Prophet (p) and said: “O Messenger, give me a permission to commit fornication.” The Companions were angry with the way that young man dared to ask such a thing, but the Prophet (p) did not. He turned and asked him: “Would you like a man to fornicate with your mother?”

The young man replied: “No. By Allah! May Allah ransom me for you!” The Prophet (p) said: “Likewise, others do not like it for their mothers. Would you like it to happen to your daughter?” The man said: “No. By Allah! Messenger of Allah, May Allah ransom me for you!” The Prophet (p) said: “Likewise others do not like it for their daughters...”

We can also look at how he addressed the man who was enraged that his fair skinned wife gave birth to a dark-skinned child. The man had approached the Prophet (peace) and said: “O Messenger of Allah! A dark-skinned boy was born to me.”

The Prophet (p) said: “Do you have any camels?” He replied: “Yes.” He was then asked: “What colour are they?” He replied: “They are red.” The Prophet (p) asked: “Are any of them ever dark gray?” He replied: “Yes.” Finally he was asked: “How is that?” The man replied: “Perhaps it resembles one of its ancestors.” The Prophet (p) said: “Then perhaps your son resembles one of his ancestors.”

These examples are rich with lessons for anyone who has a perceptive heart and they depict for us various approaches to persuasion and replacing anger with calm. How we speak and the words we choose will determine the outcome of dialogue. Do your dialogues end with confrontation or peace? If the former then the remedial course of action is:

**Obey the Prophet...  
for in him you have  
the best example, the best model,  
the pinnacle of good character.  
He’s a Mercy for the Worlds.**

# Message of Mercy

**Brevity  
& Succinctness  
are hallmarks  
of the  
Prophets’  
applications.**

**Prophet Muhammad (p) in his  
unique way of making us better  
leaders said: “Facilitate,  
do not complicate life;  
bring joyful tidings,  
do not repel.”**

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**T**hink about the Companions on the last ten nights of Ramadan. They are ardently seeking out *Laylatul Qadr* (Night of Power) through the recitation of Qur'ân and by standing all night in prayer. They are inspired by the Prophet's words: "Anyone who stands in prayer on the night known as *Laylatul Qadr* and does so with faith and the hope of Allah's reward will have all of his past sins forgiven." It is a night wherein worship has the value of the worship of a thousand months. The Companions are staying in the mosque. They have taken themselves away from all of their worldly concerns to free themselves up for that most blessed night.

And what is Aishah's concern on that night? She goes to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asks him: "What is the best supplication that will be answered on this night?" The Prophet (p) replies with the following supplication: "O Allah! You are the pardoner. You love to pardon. So pardon me."

We should pause and think about the significance of this recommendation and the lessons we can learn from it when calling others to Allah.

First of all, we should take note of the brevity of this supplication. Indeed, brevity and succinctness are hallmarks of the Prophets' supplications.

This is a lesson for those of us who wish to address the people and who wish to have the people want to hear what we have to say – and wish for more. We should be brief in what we say and not bore the people with unnecessary exposition and repetition.

The Prophet (p) said: "The brevity of a man's sermon and the length of his prayer is an indication of his understanding."

Al-Shawkânî comments on this hadith saying: "It is so surprising that people who claim to follow the Sunnah and to the way of the Pious Predecessors prolong their Friday sermons to the point that it wearies the listeners. Sometimes, they speak to advance their ideology or promote their

point of view or to praise some sheikh or speak about some other matter that is not suited to the purpose for which the Friday sermon was prescribed."

Returning to the meaning of the supplication that Prophet Muhammad (p) suggested to Aishah, we see that it asserts the most suitable of Allah's attributes to be invoked in supplications – and that is the attribute of pardon and all that it implies of mercy and forgiveness. Humanity needs to be constantly reminded of these meanings. These should be the themes of our sermons and exhortations far more often than the themes of fear, reprisal, and damnation in Hell.

For truly, Allah's mercy precedes His wrath and His pardon precedes his displeasure. How strange it is for speakers to dishearten the people with talk of punishment, when Allah says: "O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Do not despair of Allah's mercy. Truly, Allah forgives all sins. Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." [Sûrah al-Zumar: 53]

How can they prefer to speak of Allah's wrath when Prophet Muhammad (p) swore the following words by his Lord: "I swear by Allah! Allah is more merciful to His servants than a mother is to her child."

We should consider that the supplication "O Allah! You are the pardoner. You love to pardon. So pardon me" is recommended for the choicest of times – at the times when supplications are most likely to be answered, at the times when the supplicant's heart is at its most humble and most aware. For a heart to be truly hopeful, it must be free from heedlessness and insincerity.

What applies to supplications applies to listening to exhortations as well. This is why the Prophet (p) often used to appoint his Companions to exhort one another instead of doing so himself. He did this to avoid their growing weary, even though he was clearly the most capable and effective preacher among them and they were the most eager to hear his words.

How much we today need to have this understanding in mind when calling others to Islam and to righteousness. We need to take the times and circumstances into account and to choose the appropriate time and place to speak. If we understand our true objective in calling others is to soften their hearts and

bring them to want what is right, we will be able to use our preaching and exhortations as an effective tool for reform and guidance. Our words should never be a discouragement. They should not be an obstacle in the way of the people's affections.

Glad tidings and clemency are nearer to the people's hearts and have a greater positive impact on their conduct. **Kindness never enters into a matter without beautifying it, just as coarseness never enters a matter without disgracing it.**

Be compassionate to those on earth that the One in the Heavens will bestow His mercy on you we are reminded. Creation is a living testimony to the infinite mercy, grace and beneficence of God, comprehending all existence and non-existence. More so, in the case of humans. Through Him **alone** life, universe and our existence find meaning and significance. How else can we explain the mercy and bounties of God upon us in this world, and a promise of supreme reward in the hereafter? "No human being can imagine what blissful delights, as yet hidden await them in the life to come as a reward for all that they did." (32:17) We are so surrounded by blessings and they are so abundant that our souls cry out in ecstasy: "Praise & thanks are for God, the Sustainer of the universe!"

Love, mercy and kindness evoke kindred feelings. They engender an effusion of feelings of gratitude and love for the Benefactor. "Shall the recompense of goodness be other than goodness?" (55:60) We struggle in vain to express our feelings, but are unable to find appropriate words on our tongues, except: "All praise and thanks are for Allah." If this be the beginning of our spiritual journey then our destination resounds with a similar echo: "Those who believe and work righteousness – their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Beneath them will flow rivers in Gardens of Bliss. This will be their cry therein: "Glory to you, O Allah!" And peace will be their greeting therein! And the close of their cry will be

**O Allah!**

**You are the pardoner.**

**You love to pardon.**

**So pardon me.**