

will be their greeting therein! And the close of their cry will be “All praise be to Allah, the Cherisher & Sustainer of the Worlds!” (10:9-10)

The Power of Persuasion

There is a story about the Sun & 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 & 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 willingly.

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

The Quran illuminates the importance of persuasion & emphasize to us its effectiveness. See how the verses of the Quran bring arguments & evidence & 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 & death.’ He said: ‘I give life & 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. Allah does not guide a people who are unjust.” [Surah 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? 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 & lies.” [40:28]

See how wisely the Prophet (p) dealt with a young man who asked his permission to engage in sin. The young man said: “O Messenger, give me 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 & 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.” The Prophet (p) said: “Likewise others do not like it for their daughters...” The Companions, like so many mullahs today, wanted to punish. In the Prophet’s wisdom he knew that punishment may make us obey the orders we are given, but at best it will only teach an obedience to authority, not a self-control which enhances our self-respect.

A man was foolishly enraged. His fair skinned wife gave birth to a dark-skinned child. The man in misguided agony wept: “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. They depict for us various approaches to persuasion & replacing anger with calm. How we speak & 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.*

“A giver of maintenance to widows & the poor, is like a bestower in the way of God, an utterer of prayers all night, and a keeper of constant fasts.” A Merciful Messenger with A Message of Mercy, indeed!

Message of Mercy

& Brevity

Succinctness

are hallmarks

of the Prophets’

supplications

& exhortations.

Prophet Muhammad (p) in his unique way of making us better said:

“The brevity of a person’s sermon & the length of their prayer is an indication of their understanding.”

“It is not a sixth or a tenth of a person’s devotion which is acceptable to God, but only such portions thereof as they offer with understanding & true devotional spirit.”

“Facilitate, do not complicate life; bring joyful tidings, do not repel.”

Think about the Companions on the last ten nights of Ramadan. They are ardently seeking out *Laylatul Qadr* (Night of Power) through the recitation of Quran & 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 & does so with faith & the hope of Allah's reward will have all of their 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 their worldly concerns to contemplate on Allah on that most blessed night.

What is Aishah's concern on that night? She asks the Prophet: "What is the best supplication that will be answered on this night?" The Prophet (p) replies: "**O Allah! You are the pardoner. You love to pardon. So pardon me.**" A few earthly words with meaning as vast as the hereafter. When a person, like Aishah, is self-motivated (she asks questions), the teacher cannot keep them from learning.

Also, pause & think about the significance of this recommendation & the lessons to be learnt when calling others to Allah. Take note of the brevity of this supplication. Indeed, brevity & succinctness are hallmarks of the Prophets' supplications. In that "pardoning" petition Aishah learnt, as we all must, the art of & value in negotiation, to demonstrate the ability to empathize, the willingness to compromise, and the readiness to apologize for hurt you have inflicted on others.

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

Ponder upon this wisdom of the Prophet (p): "The brevity of a man's sermon & the length of his prayer is an indication of his understanding."

It is so surprising that people who claim to follow the Prophet (p) & the way of the Pious Predecessors prolong their Friday sermons to the

point that it wearies the listeners. **Those who know much talk little. Those who know little talk much.** 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 & 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 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.**" [Surah 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 & most aware. For a heart to be truly hopeful, it must be free from heedlessness & 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 & effective preacher among them & they were the most eager to hear his words.

How much we need to have this understanding in mind when calling others to Islam & to righteousness. We need to take the times & 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 & bring them to want what is right, we will be able to use our preaching & exhortations as an effective tool for reform & guidance. Our words should never discourage. They should not be an obstacle in the way of the people's affections.

Glad tidings & clemency are nearer to the people's hearts & 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. Moreso, in the case of humans. Through Him **alone** life, universe & our existence find meaning & significance. How else can we explain the mercy & 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 surrounded by blessings & they are so abundant that our souls cry out in involuntary ecstasy: "**Praise & thanks are for God, the Sustainer of the universe!**" Alhamdulillah!

Love, mercy & kindness evoke kindred feelings. They engender an effusion of feelings of gratitude & 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 praises are for Allah." If this be the beginning of our spiritual journey then our destination resounds with a similar echo: "**Those who believe & 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!" Peace**

© Allah!

You are the pardoner.

You love to pardon.

So pardon me.

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