

تَزْكِيَةُ النَّفْسِ

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

STEPS TO LOVE ALLAH
LEARNING ABOUT ALLAH
HIS QUALITIES AND BLESSINGS

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Steps to Love Allāh Learning about Allāh, His Qualities, and Blessings

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



We mentioned how essential it is for a believer to love Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and we mentioned that when the Messenger ﷺ told the Sahābah that they will be with those whom they love, when he said,

أَنْتَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ

Anas رضي الله عنه said,

مَا رَأَيْتُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَرِحُوا بِشَيْءٍ بَعْدَ الْإِسْلَامِ مِثْلَ فَرَحِهِمْ بِهَا

After their faith in Islām, nothing brought the Sahābah greater joy (than knowing they will be with those whom they love).

Nothing brought the Sahābah greater joy than knowing they will be with those whom they love. They were thrilled to realize that the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى raises their rank and that they would be with those whom they love. They understood that being honest with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in their love for Him would bring them rewards and levels in Jannah that few other actions could achieve. Certain acts of 'ibādah may have shortcomings when performing them. A believer is always in doubt of his actions no matter how sincere and good they appear to be.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ

*And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be
returning to their Lord.*

However, if a person truly dedicates their heart to loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Messenger ﷺ, this sincere love can compensate for the deficiencies in their other 'Ibādāt. This love can elevate one to higher ranks in Jannah than other 'Ibādāt alone might not have been enough to get him to, and that's why Anas رضي الله عنه also said,

فَأَنَا أُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَأَبَا بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ فَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَإِنْ لَمْ أَعْمَلْ بِأَعْمَالِهِمْ

*I love Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and the Messenger ﷺ and I love Abu Bakr and I love 'Umar and I
hope that I will be amongst them even though I didn't act like them.*

The love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى makes the tiniest acts of 'Ibādah mighty, and it brings blessings and sweetness to the simplest acts of 'Ibādah. A hardworking person who's a Sābiqun bil-Khayrāt and a person who's struggling to perform his deeds, a Dhālimun li-Nafsih or a Muqtasid, they will not succeed in their 'Ibādah without the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Having said that, it's important to remember that actions are a fundamental aspect of our faith. Actions devoid of the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى lack true essence, and similarly, love that is not accompanied by action cannot be considered genuine love. To demonstrate one's love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, or to seek the Love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, or to elevate oneself in their ranks of the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, an individual must substantiate his love through his actions.

Now the question after this introduction and after our last few talks is,
“What's the path to loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى?”, “What are the factors that lead to
loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى?”, “What are the practical steps that lead to loving Allāh

سبحانه وتعالى "When a person's heart is filled with the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, it leads to amazing results that are reflected in one's 'Ibādah and in one's actions. The love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى creates a sense of 'Ubūdīyyah that nothing else can provide. So what factors lead to loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله listed ten factors and other Ulamā' mentioned other factors as well. We'll talk about some of them. I believe the first and most important one, that we touched upon many times in our talks — and it's okay to repeat it again and again, we'll repeat it through different ways — the first one is knowledge of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Your first step in loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is to learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Ni'am over you. Specifically for this matter, one needs to focus on knowledge of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Names and Qualities. One must observe and understand these Names and Qualities and experience their beauty and their principles. When the Mu'attilah and Jahmīyyah denied the Attributes of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, they were likened to bandits. Why? Because by rejecting the Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى they robbed individuals of the opportunity to establish a genuine connection with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. A highway robber obstructs an individual's journey to their destination by seizing their possessions or by killing them. The Mu'tazilah and Jahmīyyah and others who denied the Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, they hinder and obstruct the hearts from attaining their ultimate goal of reaching Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in 'Ubūdīyyah. The Qur'ān mentions the Names and Attributes of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and the Actions of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى more than it talks about eating, drinking, marriage, and Jannah. The verses that include Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Names and Qualities are more significant than those that talk about the afterlife, as Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله stated. In fact, this topic is so great that the greatest verse in the Qur'ān is Āyat Al-Kursi because it consists of Names and Attributes of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. And likewise, the greatest Sūrah, Al-Fātihah, has many of the Attributes of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[All] praise is [due] to Allāh, Lord of the worlds

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.

And Al-Ikhlās, which is one-third of the Qur’ān, it also has Qualities of Allāh سبحانه — Al-Ahad, As-Samad, لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. In Sahīh Muslim, when the Messenger ﷺ sent a Sahābi on an expedition and he would lead the congregation in Salāh. He would recite as usual, but at the end of the recitation, he would always end it with قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. When they returned to the Messenger ﷺ, they mentioned that to the Messenger ﷺ and he told them to ask him why he does that. He said,

لِأَنَّهَا صِفَةُ الرَّحْمَنِ وَأَنَا أَحِبُّ أَنْ أَقْرَأَ بِهَا

It has an Attribute of Ar-Rahmān and because of that, I love to recite it.

And the Messenger ﷺ responded and said,

أَخْبِرُوهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّهُ

Inform him that Allāh سبحانه و تعالى loves him.

The Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in that simple, short Sūrah made him love Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and in return Allāh سبحانه وتعالى loved him back. Imagine if you dwell on many of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Names and Qualities. The Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in that simple short Sūrah, Ahad and Samad alone by themselves, and their implications on your life are sufficient to change your entire life.

When the Sahābah رضي الله عنهم started an 'Ibādah, they would continue with that 'Ibādah throughout their lives. Imagine fasting on Mondays and Thursdays or fasting every other day for years and decades. Imagine waking up for Qiyām every single day of your life for days, years, and decades. What brought them sweetness to that 'Ibādah and their biggest inspiration and boost to continue is knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ ۚ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ج

Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them - so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?"

This verse is ordering 'Ibādah. It starts with the Qualities of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and it ends with them. The start and end of the verse is the boost to performing and continuing in 'Ibādah and finding sweetness in it.

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا

Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them ...

You're worshipping Him because you love Him, because He's the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what's between them and He sustains them.

فَاعْبُدْهُ وَأَصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ

So worship Him and have patience for His worship.

وَأَصْطَبِرْ means أَصْبِرْ, be patient, same meaning. They both mean be patient in 'Ibādah. But there's a linguistic rule in Arabic that says زيادة المباني تدلّ على زيادة المعاني. When there's an additional letter added to the root of a word, like here the ط is added, it gives more emphasis and meaning. It's an exaggerated emphasized form of patient. But here is where the boost in sweetness comes from.

هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا

Do you know of any similarity to Him?"

You worship Him because of His Qualities and that there's no one equal or similar or comparable to Him or to His Attributes. If one believes in Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Qualities, it will inherit good pure deeds. That's why the verse talking about 'Ibādah starts with Qualities and ends with Qualities.

Take Names of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Qualities and contemplate to see how they reflect on your day-to-day life. Al-Hafīdh, the All-Protecting — remember He protects what's in the heavens and the earth and what's between them. He protects his servants from doubts, desires, and harms. Take the quality and remember how Allāh سبحانه وتعالى protected you personally. You missed an

accident by moments and could have lost your life. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى saved your child or your loved one from a difficult situation or imminent harm. Who didn't go through such situations? Some [situations] that we know Allāh سبحانه وتعالى protected us in and others that we don't know He protected us. Every Name of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and every Attribute of His greatness calls for a special kind of love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Al-Karīm, the Generous, the All-Generous, you love Him for His generosity. Al-Jalīl, the Majestic, you love Him for His Majesty. And when you reflect on his name Ar-Rahīm, for example, the Most Merciful, you love Him for His Mercy. The more a person knows about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, the more love, respect, and fear grow within him. So what we're trying to emphasize is that the journey to loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى begins at the gate of truly understanding who Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is. And that's why Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله تعالى said,

أصل المحبة هو معرفة الله سبحانه وتعالى

When someone is unaware of their Creator and they don't recognize His greatness, they will not have proper love for him, in fact, they'll treat Allāh سبحانه وتعالى in a way that doesn't reflect His Majesty and Perfection. This can also lead to people loving their own possessions and their own wealth more than they love Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and they give them priority over Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. والعياذ بالله. Beneficial knowledge about Allah سبحانه وتعالى isn't just about what's appealing to the mind. Many people can talk beautifully and impressively about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, but when you look at their actions, they don't match their words! They don't have any fear, piety, respect, reverence, or Walā' and Barā'. They don't have that in their lives, but when they talk, they speak about Allāh eloquently. It's not about learning the principles and speaking to the emotions. This knowledge should speak to both the mind and the heart. Knowledge about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى must engage the mind and the heart. This engagement should continue until the

message truly resonates within the hearts and feelings, it must create a stable sense of faith in the hearts that reflects in the actions and the behavior.

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ

And so those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it.

وَلْيَعْلَمَ — knowledge! Knowledge is not enough. The verse then says, فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ. After knowledge, the hearts need to submit to that knowledge. You attain the knowledge, then the heart submits, and then it shows on one's actions and behaviors.

To deepen your love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, concentrate on recognizing your blessings in relationship to His Attributes. Love grows when you recognize the Blessings, Graces, and Favors of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The more you reflect on His Blessings, on His Ihsān, on His Ni'am, and on the goodness that He gave you, the stronger your love for Him will be. That love gains sweetness when you attach the Ni'am to his Names and Qualities. "Al-Karīm gave me that." The affection we hold for our mothers is deep-seated, and it's deep-seated because it stems from their sacrifices, their unwavering support, and their steadfast loyalty. In light of this, contemplate the countless blessings that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى has bestowed upon us throughout our lives. Every moment, even in the briefest instant, you're surrounded by innumerable blessings from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. The most significant, righteous deed that fosters and cultivates love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the remembrance of blessings and their connection to the Bestower. It's so essential for your Īmān and for your love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that Allāh سبحانه encouraged this throughout the Qur'ān.

فَاذْكُرُواْ الْاَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلَحُوْنَ

Remember the Graces of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى that He bestowed upon you if you want to succeed.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ خَلْقٍ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ

O mankind, remember the favor of Allāh upon you. Is there any creator other than Allāh who provides for you from the heaven and earth?

in Sūrat Fātir.

وَاذْكُرُوْهُ كَمَا هَدٰكُمْ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الضّٰلِّينَ

And remember Him, as He has guided you, for indeed, you were before that among those astray.

It's impossible to list all of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's blessings, as we already discussed. However, we should make an effort to recognize and count some of them. The blessings of guidance and protection, the blessing of well-being, the blessing of sustenance and preservation, the blessing of concealing our sins and faults, the blessing of His Kindness and Mercy. We hold deep love for Him due to His boundless Ihsān, Ni'am, and Generosity over us. Our love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى stems from the countless blessings that He's granted us, blessings that are beyond enumeration. When it comes to the alleviation of our difficulties, it's impossible to quantify the numerous trials and tribulations from which He has rescued us, both those that we're aware of and those that remain unknown to us.

If someone offered you his daughter for marriage or made the marriage easy for you, he captivates you with that simple act, and you sit and speak about it to your children, your grandchildren, and even your great-grandchildren. How many times have you sat with your family members remembering the Ni'am of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? One should sit with his family and discuss the Ni'am of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and have his children write them down, and he as an adult should write them down. This is an established 'Ibādah many are mindless of. In Sahīh Muslim the Messenger ﷺ walked upon his companions gathering, and he said, "Why are you gathering here?" They said,

جَلَسْنَا نَذْكُرُ اللَّهَ وَنُحَمِّدُهُ عَلَى مَا هَدَانَا لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا

We're sitting here to remember Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and to praise Him for guiding us to Islām and bestowing favors upon us.

They were sitting remembering some of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Favors, and the Messenger ﷺ said,

اللَّهُ مَا أَجَلَسَكُمْ إِلَّا ذَاكَ؟

By Allāh, nothing made you sit together except that?

They said there was no other purpose. The Messenger ﷺ told them, "I don't suspect you, but Jibrīl عليه السلام came to me and told me that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى was talking proudly about you to the angels."

One night Al-Fudayl Ibn 'Iyād and Sufyān Ibn 'Uyaynah sat all night until the morning talking about the blessings they had received. Sufyān kept saying, "Allāh سبحانه وتعالى *blessed us with this. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى blessed us with that. He has done this for us he has done that for us.*" When Allāh سبحانه وتعالى blessed the Messenger ﷺ and the Sahābah with some Ni'am, he reminded them of this. He wanted them to continuously remember these Ni'am. Verses in Sūrat Al-Anfāl were revealed to remind the Sahābah of the great blessings that were bestowed upon them. The blessing of Victory,

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّفِينَ

[Remember] when you were asking help of your Lord, and He answered you, "Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand from the angels, following one another."

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ

And Allāh made it not but good tidings and so that your hearts would be assured thereby.

Blessing after blessing within the battle — the slumber, the rain, the angels — He wanted them to remember these blessings. The same thing after Al-Ahzāb. After Al-Ahzāb Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا

O you who have believed, remember the favor of Allāh upon you when armies came to [attack] you and We sent upon them a wind and armies [of angels] you did not see.

Remember Allāh سبحانه وتعالى's Blessing over you, because it's an 'Ibādah, and that's an 'Ibādah that leads to you loving Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Hearts, as we've said many times, are naturally inclined to love those who treat them well and to dislike those who do wrong to them. When one is blessed with so many Ni'am and he takes them for granted, he will not realize his love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. You usually remember Ni'am when they're taken away. You need to remember the Ni'am while you still have them and to thank Allāh سبحانه وتعالى for them so you can attain love for Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Who treats you better than Allāh سبحانه? If you love your parents for all the good they've done for you, then Allāh سبحانه has given you *way* more than that. No one is more generous to you than Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. His Kindness, His Ihsān, His Ni'am over you are in every moment of your life. We experience His Goodness in all circumstances and it's impossible to fully grasp the different forms of Ni'am that He bestowed upon us. Look at simple things that go unnoticed. On average, we breathe in and out approximately twenty-five thousand times a day, and imagine how much greater and more significant the blessings beyond this are, that you're given that you don't notice. In addition to that, remember that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى protects you from various forms of harm that may be directed towards you. Many are unaware that the Ni'am of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى protecting you from harm may be equivalent or more than the abundance of Ni'am you're already getting.

So the summary of this talk is that the first practical factor or step to attaining the love of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is to learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. If you want to love Allāh, learn about Allāh سبحانه وتعالى through His Names and through His Qualities. List the blessings of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Attach the blessings to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and to His Qualities. Al-Karīm gave us shelter and housing, Al-Hafīdh protected us from harm and from evil, and so on.

وصلی اللہ علی سیدنا محمد وعلی آلہ وصحبہ وسلم