

# Useful Ways of Leading a Happy Life

## Author's Introduction

*Praise belongs to Allah, to Whom all praise is due. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his family and his companions.*

There is no doubt that the bliss of the heart, its tranquility and happiness, and the absence of grief and worry from it, is the goal of every individual. It is the means by which a happy, blissful and excellent life is achieved. There are means to achieve this; some of which are religious, some are natural and some are physical. These means are never gathered together except to the believers. The non-believers on the other hand, despite the fact that the earnest endeavours of their philosophers is to lead them to these means, even if they achieve them in certain aspects, they miss the way to them in several other aspects that are more beneficial, more permanent and better in yielding results.

I will mention in this treatise of mine the ways and means to achieve this lofty goal that is the quest of every individual. Some people are successful in following these ways, and therefore live a good and pure life and enjoy their life. Some woefully fail in following any of them, and they live a wretched and miserable life. Others lie between these two extremes; by the level of their following these means, by that level do they live a good life. And it is Allah that guides to all that is good, and wards off all that is evil, and it is His Help we seek in this.

## *Iman* and Righteous Deeds

The greatest and fundamental means of achieving a good life is *iman* (certain belief) and good deeds. Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and is a true believer, verily to him will We give a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions."[*Al-Qur'an* 16:97]

So Allah, *the Most High*, informs and promises whoever joins true belief with good and righteous deeds, that He will give him a good and pure life in this world, and a good reward in this world and in the Hereafter.

The reason behind this is very clear. This is because true believers in Allah, who have a sound belief that gives rise to righteous deeds, and mends the heart and corrects human behaviour, and makes good both this world and the Hereafter; such a people have the basic elements that guide them in dealing with situations of happiness and joy, and situations of anxiety, sorrow and grief.

They gratefully accept situations of happiness and joy, and are thankful, and use them in what is beneficial. When they use them in this manner, they experience additional joy, and they desire the blessings of these things and hope that they remain with them, and also yearn for the good reward of those who are thankful to Allah. This feeling and experience brings with it so much good and blessings, far greater than the joy that is the primary cause of it.

On the other hand, in a harmful and unpleasant situations, situations of grief and sorrow, they deal with them by resisting what is resistible, and lightening what could be lightened, and they persevere with a beautiful contentment over what they have no power to resist. By this they achieve the benefits of earnest struggle, and gather experience and inner strength, and earn the reward of patience and perseverance, the greatness of which belittles in comparison the distasteful things that befell them. As a result they end up having in place of the unpleasant things, joy and good hope, and a sincere desire in the favours of Allah and His reward. The Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, beautifully expressed this situation in a *sahih hadith*, where he said:

"The affair of the believer is really wonderful! All his affairs are good: when he is touched by ease and affluence, he is thankful, and that is good for him; and when he is touched by suffering he is patient, and that is good for him. And this only for the believer." [Muslim]

The Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, informs us in this *hadith* that the good of the believer and his gains, and the excellent benefits of his deeds, are multiplied several fold in all the things that befall him, be they pleasant or unpleasant.

This is why you see two people afflicted by the same ups and downs of life situations, and they differ so widely in the way they encounter them, in accordance with the level of their *iman* and righteous deeds.

The one with *iman* and righteous deeds encounters both good and bad situations with what we mentioned of thankfulness in good situations, and patience in bad ones, plus the other things that go along with them. As a result of this, he experiences joy and happiness; and grief and sorrow leave him, and he becomes free from misery, anxiety, and constriction of the heart, and he lives a good and happy life in this world.

The other one, on the other hand, encounters joyful and agreeable situations with insolence, arrogance and rebellion. As a result of this, his behaviour deviates, and he becomes just like an animal: encountering his joy with utter greed, and burning anxiety and restlessness. And despite that, his heart is still not at rest. He is restless for several reasons: he is restless out of fear that the good things will vanish, and out of the feeling of anxiety for the struggle to retain them; he is restless out of the burning urge and desire to acquire more, because the human self by its nature knows no limits to what it desires, and he may acquire them and he may not. Even if he acquires them

the restlessness still persists, because the circle will repeat itself on him viciously. And when he is afflicted with unpleasant things, he is worried, full of despair, fearful and sorrowful. Only Allah knows the degree of the wretchedness of the life he is going through, and the mental and psychological sickness associated with it, and the extent of the fear that would ultimately lead to more horrible and heinous results. This is because he neither has any hope of getting a reward, nor any patience that will console him and lighten his pains.

All this is known from human experience. There are many examples in life, which if you reflect upon even one of them, and observe through it human experiences, you will definitely see the wide difference between the true believer who is acting in accordance with his certain belief, and the person who is not like him. This is because the religion of truth strongly urges contentment with Allah's provision, and with whatever He gives His slaves out of His favour and vast generosity.

If the believer is afflicted with illness or poverty, or similar tribulations that no individual is free from, he is happy and contented, because of his certain belief, contentment and satisfaction with what Allah has decreed for him. His heart does not quest for what has not been destined to him. He looks at people that are less fortunate than him, and he does not look at those who are above him in worldly riches. By this he might even be happier and more delighted and peaceful than the one who has all his worldly needs met, but has not been gifted with contentment.

The opposite is the case of the one who does not act in accordance with *iman*; when he is afflicted with poverty or loses some of his worldly needs, you find him in utter despair and wretchedness.

Another example is when fear and disturbing events befall a person; you find the one with sound *iman* having a firm heart, and he is calm and firmly in control of the situation, by making the best use of his faculties of thought, speech and action, as though he has already prepared himself for the event. This type of reaction puts him at ease, and strengthens his heart.

The reaction of the one without *iman* on the other hand, is the direct opposite of this. When he encounters fearful situations, his heart trembles, and his nerves becomes tense, and his intellect loses its focus. There is nothing inside him except alarm and fear. The outward terror is increased by his inward restlessness, the degree of which is beyond expression. This type of people among mankind, if they do not acquire some of the natural means at the disposal of every human being for dealing with troubles through life experiences, their energy becomes completely sapped, and they suffer a nervous breakdown. This is because they lack the *iman* that encourages patience, especially in situations of difficulty and anxiety.

It is true that both the good and the bad, and the believer and the one who rejects faith, both share the common human quality of acquired courage, as well as the innate ability to deal with dreadful situations and lighten their oppressive effects on the self. But the believer, because of his strong belief, patience and reliance and trust in Allah, and his desire to be rewarded by Allah, excels in having qualities that make him more courageous, and soothe more effectively the pangs of terror and the pains of calamity on him. As Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"If you are suffering hardships, they too are suffering similar hardships: but you hope from Allah that for which they hope not." [Al-Qur'an 4:104]

In addition to that, the believers receive from Allah His special help, succour and assistance that will drive away the dread and terror that befell them. Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"And be patient. Surely Allah is with those who are patient." [Al-Qur'an 8:46]

2. Among the means of eliminating worry, grief and anxiety is goodness to creation, by words, by deeds, and by all types of good acts. All of these are good and excellent in the sight of Allah, and by them Allah removes worries and anxieties from both the good and the bad; each in accordance with his level of being good to creation. Except that the portion of the believer is more complete and perfect, and he also excels by the fact that his goodness is borne out of sincerity to Allah and seeking his reward. As a result Allah makes the act of doing good and granting it easy for him because of his hope in the goodness with Allah; and He removes from him in pleasant things because of his sincerity and his seeking the reward of Allah. Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"There is no good in most of their secret conferences except (in) him who exhorts to a deed of charity (in Allah's cause), or goodness, or conciliation between people. Whoever does that seeking the pleasure of Allah, We shall bestow on him an immense reward." [Al-Qur'an 4:114]

Allah, *the Most High*, informs us that these things are all acts of goodness whosoever does them. And acts of goodness bring them good, and remove evil. But the true believer, who seeks the reward and pleasure of Allah, for him Allah gives an immense reward. Part of that immense reward is the removal of grief, sorrow and anguish.

### **Occupying Oneself with Some Activity or Useful Knowledge**

3. Among the means of warding off anxieties arising out of nervousness and the preoccupation of the heart with some sorrowful things: occupying oneself with one activity or another, or with some useful knowledge. This is because doing that will distract the heart away from being immersed in its anxieties. It might even make him forget the things that caused him grief and worry, and he may even experience some happiness and become cheerful. This is also something that is common between both the believer and the non-believer. But the believer is different; because when he occupies himself with the knowledge that he is seeking or giving, or with the good action he is doing - whether it be an act of worship, or worldly act in which he has a good intention of doing it to seek strength in worshipping Allah - when he does that, he does it out of his belief in Allah, sincerity and seeking the pleasure of Allah. This in itself has the additional effect of warding off grief, worries and anxieties (by a Divine intervention).

We have seen many people afflicted with sorrows and permanent anxieties, to the extent of making them very ill; their only cure was to make them forget the cause of their sorrow and misery, and be preoccupied with their normal activities. The activity to be preoccupied with should be something pleasing to the self, and one that it yearns

for. This makes it more effective in achieving the desired goal, and all knowledge is with Allah.

4. Among the things that ward off worry and anxiety is to concentrate one's attention and concern oneself with the affairs of the present, and to stop being anxious about the future, or grieving over the past. This is why the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, sought refuge in Allah from anxiety and grief (this is in a *hadith* reported by Bukhari and Muslim). Grief is usually over past events that you can neither bring back nor rectify. Anxiety is usually fear and concern over what will come in the future. Therefore a person should be the 'son of the moment', concentrating his energy and attention in the betterment of his existing events, and his present moments. Concentrating attention over the affairs of the moment is the necessary cause of their accomplishment, and it is what gets rid of grief and anxiety from the heart. When the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, asks something from Allah, or guides his community to ask specific thing from Allah, he is exhorting them that together with seeking help from Allah, and having hope in His favour, at the same time they have to work hard and earnestly for the accomplishment of what they asked to be removed from them. Therefore making *du'a* (asking something from Allah) should go side by side with action. So the slave strives for what will benefit him in his religion and in his worldly life, and he asks his Lord to make him accomplish his need, and he seeks His help in that. As the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, said:

"Strive for what will benefit you, and seek the help of Allah, and do not be incapacitated. And if something afflicts you, do not say: 'if I had done such and such, such and such would have happened.' But say: 'This is the decree of Allah, He does what He wills.' This is because 'if' opens the act of Shaytan." [Muslim]

In this *hadith*, the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, exhorts us to join between two things: the first is to strive for useful things in all situations, and seek the help of Allah, and not to yield and surrender ourselves to incapacity, because that is harmful negligence. The second is to surrender to Allah over past events that have passed, and witness in them the decree of Allah and His predestination.

We see that the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, has delineated two categories of affairs: the first category is affairs that the slave has the ability to accomplish totally or partially, or those that he can avoid completely or at least lighten their burden. For this category, the slave should exert his utmost, and seek the help of his Deity. The second category is those affairs over which the slave has no power. For this, the slave should calm himself, and accept what came to him and surrender (to Allah). There is no doubt that this is a principle complying with which is a definite means of achieving happiness and keeping worry and grief at bay.

### Remembering Allah Much

5. Among the greatest means to achieve the expansion of the heart and its tranquility and satisfaction is abundant remembrance of Allah. Remembrance of Allah has a wonderful effect of bringing expansion and tranquility to the heart, and removing worry and grief from it. Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"Without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do heart finds satisfaction."[*Al-Qur'an* 13:28]

This is because of the special effect that the remembrance of Allah over the hearts, and the fact that the slave, when remembering Allah has the hope of receiving a good reward and recompense from Him.

6. Among these things also is proclaiming and mentioning the favours and blessings of Allah on oneself, both the outwardly manifest, and the hidden. There is no doubt that recognition of Allah's favours and blessings, and speaking about them, is a means by which Allah removes grief and worry from the heart, and makes a person thankful to Allah. The station of thankfulness is in itself a station of sublimity and excellence, whatever the amount of poverty or illness, or other forms of tribulations that engulf him. When he compares the limitless and uncountable favours of Allah on him, and the unpleasant things that befell him, he sees how extremely small they are in comparison with the blessings of Allah on him.

In fact, trials and tribulations are such that when the slave is afflicted with them, and he does what is required of him of patience, acceptance and surrender, their oppressive burden becomes light, and their pain becomes mild. In addition to that, the hope that the slave has in the reward of Allah, and his belief in the fact that he is worshipping Allah by his being patient and accepting what Allah has tried him with, these things sweeten the bitterness of the affliction. So the sweetness of the reward causes him to forget the bitterness of the patience.

7. Among the most useful things in this respect also is working with the teaching of the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, in a confirmed *hadith* where he said:

"Look at those that are below you (in worldly positions), and do not look at those that are above you (in worldly positions); that is more befitting for you not to hold the favours and blessings of Allah on you with contempt."[Bukhari and Muslim]

If the slave were to put this noble teaching in front of his eyes, he would realise how far he has been exalted and favoured over many people: in well-being and exemption from tribulations, in richness and what comes with it; and this is true no matter what his condition is. If he does this, his anxiety will vanish, as well as grief and worry, and his delight and joy with the favours and blessings of Allah by which he has been placed above many who are lower than him, will increase.

### **Forgetting the Unpleasant Things that Have Passed**

8. Among the necessary causes of happiness and cessation of grief and worry, is striving to remove the things that bring about grief, and acquire those that bring about happiness. This is achieved by forgetting the unpleasant things that have passed and he has no power to bring them back, and knowing that occupying his mind with them is meaningless; in fact it is stupidity, bordering and lunacy. Therefore he has to struggle with his mind not to think of them. He should also struggle with his mind not to worry over the future, not to pay attention to illusions of poverty, fear or other unpleasant things he is imagining will descend on him in the future. He should know

that nobody knows what will happen in the future, whether good or evil, or pleasure or pain; this is in the Hands of Allah alone. The slave has no control over it. His only due is to struggle to accomplish what will benefit him in the future, and ward off harm from him. He should also know that when the slave turns his mind away from worrying over the future in his affairs, and relies on his Lord for its betterment, and is satisfied that his Lord will do that for him, when he does all that, his heart will be tranquil, and his condition will be good, and his worries and anxieties will vanish.

9. Among the most beneficial things to do concerning the future of one's affair is to be saying the prayer that the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, used to say:

"O Allah! Make my religion, which is my strength and invincibility, good for me; and make my world, wherein is my livelihood, good for me; and make my hereafter, which is my final abode, good for me. And make my living an increase for me in all that is good, and make my death a repose for me from every ill." [Muslim]

And also his saying:

"O Allah! It is Your mercy that I have hope in, so do not leave me to myself even for the blink of an eye, and make good my affairs, all of them; there is no god worthy of being worshipped but You." [Abu Dawud, with a sound chain of transmission]

If the slave says this *du'a*, which entails seeking the betterment of his future both in terms of his religion and his worldly affairs, if he says that with a mindful and aware heart, and a true and sincere intention, coupled with an earnest struggle to achieve it, Allah will definitely materialise for him what he asked for and had hope in and struggled to achieve. As a result of this, his worry will change to happiness and delight.

### Imagining the Worst Situations

10. Among the most beneficial things that remove worries and anxieties when a calamity befalls a person, is for him to struggle to lighten its difficulties by imagining the worst possible thing that would have happened to him, and to try to put up with. Then let him physically strive as much as possible to lighten the difficulty. By his striving for what will benefit him, and by his effort in putting up with it, his worries and anxieties will vanish, and he will have used his energy in achieving what is beneficial and warding off what is harmful, within normal human ability.

So if some dreadful things, or illnesses, or poverty and deprivation of wants afflict him, he should encounter that with difficulty, and try as much as possible to put up with it. In fact, he should prepare himself to put up with something worse. This is because preparing oneself mentally to deal with unpleasant things make them light, and blunts the pangs of their pains. This is especially so, when in addition to that he physically acts to ward them off. By that he joins together the dual acts of mentally preparing himself to deal with the calamity, and the physical effort to ward off the worries, which together serve to engross him away from being troubled and disturbed by the calamity. He should also make an earnest effort to replenish his inner energy

necessary for encountering these adversities. In addition to all these, he must absolutely depend on Allah in all circumstances, and have sincere trust in Him. There is no doubt that these things are very helpful in bringing about happiness and satisfaction to the heart; and besides that, there is what we hope to gain of reward in both this world and the next. This is well known from experience, and whoever tastes it knows it.

### **Firmness of the Heart and Reliance on Allah**

11. Among the greatest cures to nervous and mental disorders, and even other illnesses of the body, is the firmness of the heart and its strength and lack of its being troubled and perturbed by illusions and imaginations brought about by evil thoughts. This is because whenever a person lets imaginations get the better of him, and allows his heart to be perturbed by negative effects like fear of illness, or anger and confusion over some painful situation, or anxiety over something bad happening or over the expected loss of cherished things, whenever he lets that happen, it will surely throw him into the den of grief, sorrow, and physical and mental illnesses, and a nervous breakdown whose terrible effects are well known to all.

12. Whenever a person relies and depends on Allah, and does not surrender his heart to illusions, and does not let evil imaginations get the better of him, and puts his trust in Allah, and has a confidence in His favour, grief and sorrow will vanish from his heart as a result of these actions, and many physical and mental illnesses will leave him, and his heart will experience such joy and tranquility that are beyond expression. How many a hospital is filled with sick people suffering from mental illusions and evil imaginations! How many strong person have these things shattered their hearts, to say nothing of the weak ones! The only one exempted is the one whom Allah has given well-being, and guided him to struggle with his self in acquiring useful and beneficial means of strengthening the heart and warding off worries from it. Allah, *the Most High*, said:

"And whoever puts his trust on Allah, sufficient is Allah for him."[*Al-Qur'an* 65:3]

Meaning that Allah is sufficient for him in all that worries him concerning his religion and his worldly life.

A person who puts his trust in Allah has a strong heart that is not affected by illusions, nor perturbed by events and occurrences, because he knows that is from a weak heart, and is an act of weakness and fear that has no reality. He also knows that Allah has guaranteed the one who puts his trust in Him to suffice him completely, so he is confident in Allah, and he feels assured of the promise of Allah, as a result of which his worry and anxiety vanish, and his difficulty is replaced by ease, and his sadness by happiness, and his fear by peace and security. We ask Allah to give us well-being and exemption from adversities, and to grant us strength of heart and its firmness in having true confidence in Allah, by which He guarantees those who have it provision of all good, and removal of all harm and evil.



## Repelling Evil with Good

13. There are two important lessons to learn from the saying of the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*:

"A believing man (husband) should not hate a believing woman (wife): if he dislikes one character in her, he will like another one." [Muslim]

The first is: it gives guidance in the way to deal with wives, relations, friends, colleagues and anyone with whom you have a relationship or association. It teaches that you have to prepare yourself to accept the fact that any person with whom you have one sort of relationship or another will definitely have imperfections, bad qualities or some character that you would not like. So if you find that in him, think of what is incumbent on you, or proper for you to do regarding maintaining the ties of relationship, and preserving the bond of love and affection between you. Bring to mind his good qualities, and the importance the religion attaches to maintaining good social relations. By overlooking bad qualities, and bringing to mind the good ones, bonds of relationship and good companionship are maintained, and this is another source of harmony.

The second lesson is that it teaches us how to ward off grief and worry, and bring about an honest and sincere relationship in which each party fulfils his obligations and dues to the other, and harmony is maintained between them. The one who does not work with this teaching of the Prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be on him*, and does the opposite, whereby he busies himself with noticing the bad qualities and ignoring the good ones, there is no doubt that he will be overtaken by worries and anxieties, and there is no doubt also that the bond of love that is between him and those he loves will be cut, and many of the rights and obligations of both parties will be flouted.

Many people with high aspirations and inner energy are able to prepare themselves to deal with heavy calamities and adversities with patience and tranquility, but when they are faced with small and trivial issues, they become worried and anxious, and their hearts lose their clarity of thought and become turbid. The reason behind this is that they were able to prepare themselves to deal with major situations, and they ignored the minor ones, as a result of which the things they regarded as insignificant took them off their guard and unsettled their peace. The real strong person prepares himself to deal with both great and insignificant issues, and asks the help of Allah in that, and that Allah does not leave him to himself even for the blink of an eye. When he does that, the small issues become easy for him to handle just as the big ones, and he maintains his composure, happiness and tranquility.

## Do Not Let Grief and Worry Make Your Short Life Shorter

14. The intelligent person knows that his real life is the life he lives in happiness and tranquility, and that it is very short indeed. Therefore, he should not make it shorter by allowing grief and moaning over troubles to get the better of him, because that is the opposite of real living. He should be very covetous of his life, so that most of it does not become the loot of worries and troubles; and in this there is no difference between both the good and the bad people. Except that the believer has a more

complete and perfect realisation of this fact, and makes better use of it for the good of both this world and the hereafter.

15. When something unpleasant happens to him, or he is afraid that it will happen to him, he should remember the other blessings of Allah on him in his religion and worldly life, and compare them with the unpleasant thing. If he does that, he will realise how abundant are the blessings of Allah on him, and how insignificant are the troubles that befell him.

He should also compare between his fear in the evil that may possibly befall him, and the many other possibilities of safety and deliverance from that evil that may occur. Therefore he should not let a weak and insignificant possibility outweigh stronger and more numerous possibilities. By this, his fear and anxiety will fade away. He should also assume the occurrence of the worst possible trouble on him, and then prepare himself to deal with it if it occurs, and strive as much as possible to ward it off if it has not occurred, or remove or lighten it if it has occurred.

16. Among the useful things to remember is to know that what people do to hurt you, especially slander and other evil talk, will not hurt you. Rather it is them that it hurts. The only way it will hurt you is when you occupy yourself with grieving over it, and allow it to get the better of your feelings. When you do that it will hurt you as it did hurt them. But if you pay no attention to it, it will not hurt you in any way.

17. Know also that your life is subservient to your thoughts. If you engage your thoughts in what is useful to you in your religion and your worldly life, then your life will be good and happy. Otherwise, the opposite will be the case.

18. Among the most useful ways to drive away grief is to train yourself not to desire thanks and gratitude from anyone except Allah. So if you do good to someone who has a right over you, or has no right over you, then know that your deal is with Allah, and do not pay any heed to the thanks and gratitude of the one to whom you were good. This is as Allah, *the Most High*, said regarding His elite among creation:

"(They say): We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks." [Al-Qur'an 76:9]

This is more important when dealing with the family, children or any other person strongly connected to you. Whenever you make it your habit to drive away evil from them, you rest in peace, and make others also rest in peace.

Among the things that make life easy for you, is to follow a natural path in your effort to do righteous and excellent actions and avoid constraining yourself to follow an unnatural path that will fill your heart with worries and anxieties, and you end up going nowhere in attaining the excellent positions. This is because you followed a crooked path. All this is wisdom. Also make use of the moments of turbidity, and turn them to moments of sweetness and clarity. By that, the sweetness of your pleasures will increase and your troubles will vanish.

19. Make the attainment of useful things your goal, and strive to realise them, and pay no attention to harmful things. This will occupy you away from the things that bring

about grief and sorrow. Seize moments of leisure and mental concentration to accomplish important activities.

20. When undertaking useful things you should rank them in order of priority and importance. Find out the one which you have a stronger urge to do, and which your self desires more. Its opposite will bring about boredom, weariness and irritation. Seek help in good thinking and good counsel. It is said that the one who seeks good counsel never regrets. Study what you intend to do carefully and thoroughly. When you are certain of the good that is in it and resolve to do it, then rely on Allah, and know that Allah loves those who rely on Him.

*And Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.*

*May the peace and blessings of Allah be on our Master Muhammad, his family and companions.*

(t) Bashir Aliyu Umar  
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