

Introduction to the Purification of the Soul (part 1 of 2)

Description: Explore basic concepts related to purification of the soul from an Islamic perspective.

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Objectives

- Understand the importance of purifying the soul and its correct method.
- Appreciate the benefits of purifying the soul.

"Purification of the soul" deals with the heart. Hearts cannot obtain their desire unless they are connected with their Lord. They cannot connect with their Lord unless they are "pure," because Allah is Pure and only accepts what is pure. The purer the heart, the closer it will be to its Lord and enjoy being with Him.

"Purification of the soul" means to purify and cleanse the heart of vices and immoral traits while lending beauty to it with good deeds.

Arabic Terms

- *Tawheed* - The Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah with respect to His Lordship, His Names and Attributes and in His right to be worshipped.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.

Why Purify the Soul?

1. The Quran and *Sunnah*, the authoritative sources of Islam, emphasize purifying the soul repeatedly. If these divine sources emphasize something, it must be important for us because Allah wishes to guide us. Obviously, Allah and His Prophet would not waste our time! An example is the verse in which Allah tells us, "Prosperous are those who purify themselves." (87:14)
2. One of the reasons why Prophet Muhammad was sent was to purify the souls so they could worship their Lord. Unlike what many Orientalists have said about Prophet Muhammad and all the negative images created by the media about Islam, one of the

missions of Prophet Muhammad was to teach us, the believers, how to purify our souls. It is sad that whenever people talk about spirituality, most do not think of the profound spiritual legacy of Prophet Muhammad! Please remember that purifying you from the inside and turning you into a better human being, a purer Muslim, was the goal of your Prophet's mission.

3. There are rewards to be obtained by purifying your soul. Rewards are promised by Allah to the person who purifies his soul by practicing obedient devotion and staying away from distractions (like sins and evil). "Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams, and there they will stay. Such is the reward of those who purify themselves!" (Quran 20:76)

How Do You Purify Your Soul?

You do not have to deprive yourself of specific foods or dress in special clothing. You don't even have to climb into a cave or sit in meditation for hours. Spirituality is built into the very fabric of Islamic beliefs and practices.

1. To understand the pure Tawheed. The Quran says: "Devote yourselves to Allah and assign Him no partners, for the person who does so is like someone who has been hurled down from the skies and snatched up by the birds or flung to a distant place by the wind." (Quran 22:31)

Your belief is fundamental. These days people think you can be spiritual by following any religion, or no religion for that matter! Islam teaches the opposite. You cannot truly purify your soul unless you hold the correct beliefs about the Creator of your soul. As a Muslim, you have accepted that only Islam provides you with the correct beliefs about your Creator. That is why the pure Tawheed is so important.

2. Practicing devotional acts of obedience and abandoning prohibitions and to endure in doing both of them. Repetition and routine have great spiritual value, therefore endurance is the key. Devotional acts enlighten the heart and energize the limbs, whereas prohibitions darken the heart and make a person lazy. Think about it: if you want to purify yourself, would you do it with spiritual practices created by men or with devotional worship prescribed by Allah?

What are many "spiritual" people into these days? They dance or whirl to get into a mystic trance. They listen to meditation music, relaxation music, or they do traditional yoga^[1] or practice reiki. As a Muslim, try to find your comfort in the ritual prayer by learning them properly and focusing on Allah and what you are saying when you perform them. With persistence and practice, you will enjoy your prayers and learn to relax with it. Instead of mystical music, train your ears to listen to the Quran and train your tongue to recite it with the correct rules of recitation. It is far superior to any music!

3. Seeking religious knowledge at the hands of qualified scholars who are also well versed with the diseases of the heart and their cures according to the way of the prophets. Knowledge is the key. Ibn ul-Qayyim, a classical scholar recognized for his adherence to the *Sunnah* and his deeply spiritual writings, wrote, "Purifying the soul is

harder than healing the body. The person who purifies his soul by spiritual exercises and sitting in isolation, techniques that the prophets did not teach, is like a sick man who treats himself. The prophets knew how to cure the hearts. There is no way to purify the soul or rectify it except through their way and submitting to it." Good scholars will allow you to ask your questions and guide you with proper knowledge. It is important to follow the spiritual path of the Prophet that are found within the teachings of Islam. When one scrutinizes the method used by modern teachers like Deepak Chopra or the Dalai Lama they will surely realize the vanity and uselessness of their methods.

4. Keeping good company and being careful in selecting your friends. The company you keep will help you with purifying your soul and staying away from distractions. A person is greatly influenced by their surroundings. Good company will help you when you go through lows in your life in general or as a Muslim. A good friend will remind you when you forget and encourage you when needed. Being around like minded people, practicing Islam will not make you feel you don't fit.

Benefits of Purifying the Soul

- Success in this life and in the life to come.
- Satisfaction and comfort of the heart.
- Steadfastness in practicing Islam and obeying Allah.

A soul that is strong and prepares itself with the remembrance of Allah, seeking forgiveness from Him and turning towards Allah, will be more able to overcome the hurdles of life.

Endnotes:

[1] Different forms of yoga are practiced today in the West; some incorporate Hindu mantras and symbolism, whereas others are offered by hospitals and schools that are more therapeutic in nature and from which the religious elements have been removed. They are closer to a form of stretching. The former is not allowed, whereas the latter may be in some cases.

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