
Purification of Nafs

Lesson 4

In the last lesson, we looked at how giving in to the demands of the Tempting Nafs results in Self-Centeredness, which is a major symptom in a number of Character and Personality disorders.

As promised, this is a special lesson focusing on the holy month of Ramadhan (the month of fasting) and how fasting helps in disciplining the Nafs.

It is important that you follow these lessons in proper order to maintain continuity and progressive understanding of the topic.

Allah (ﷻ) says in the holy Qur'an

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ه ...
شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ
الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ

O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint... Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an as a guide to mankind and clear Signs for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who witnesses this month should fast in it... (2:183,185)

The word تَتَّقُونَ in this verse, which has been translated as 'self-restrained', is from the root word تقوى .

تقوى is a very comprehensive word. Among its meanings are: Piety, Fear of Allah, Self-restraint, Warding off evil, etc. All these meanings are mutually inclusive.

Allah (ﷻ) asked us to fast in this month so that we become God-fearing, self-restrained, pious and able to stay away from all that is evil.

Clearly, all these characteristics are in contradiction to what the Nafs desires – freedom to do anything and everything without any restrictions.

The Tempting Nafs is at its peak performance when the stomach is full.

Depriving it from food and drink is the first step in weakening its control and curbing its baser nature.

This is accomplished very easily in the month of Ramadhan, when we are required to fast for 29 or 30 days.

Many who are addicted to various things, such as smoking, drinking, etc., go without these things for a whole day, every day during this month.

This indicates to them that they can control and discipline their Nafs and that they can be OK without smokes and drinks.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) has prescribed fasting for young men who are unable to get married due to financial or other restraints and who find it difficult to control their sexual desires.

Once the controls of the Nafs is weakened, the higher cognitive processes of heart and soul (wisdom and knowledge) begin to function properly.

Starving the Nafs also makes one think of those others around the world who are starving, which, in turn, fosters caring for others' needs thereby decreasing self-centeredness.

In short, the holy month of Ramdhan is an excellent opportunity to begin to discipline the Nafs.

The holy month of Ramadhan will begin Insha-Allah on October 14th or 15th. During the fasting month, there will be no new lessons.

We will, Insha-Allah, continue with the topic of 'Purification of Nafs' after the holy month.

Stay tuned.

And yes, I would love to hear from some of you who are following these lessons. Please tell me if these are easily understandable, if they make sense, and if you find them beneficial. Jazak-Allah.
