



Islamic Religious Council of Singapore

Friday Sermon

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The Virtue of Openness: The Key to Self-Reflection

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَوْضَحَ لِعِبَادِهِ طُرُقَ الْهَدَايَةِ، وَيَسَّرَ لَهُمَ أَسْبَابَ النِّجَاةِ
وَالْوِقَايَةِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا
مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ الَّذِي نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ بِالْحِمَايَةِ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا
مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا. أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا
اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday congregation,

Let us observe taqwa of Allah s.w.t. by performing all his commandments and abstaining from His prohibitions. Let us ponder over what we have done and always reflect from time to time. May we be closer to Allah's mercy and may we attain His blessing and pleasure. Amin.

Blessed Friday congregation,

In a few weeks, we will be entering the new year. This means that a year would have passed by us. Perhaps we should pause and ponder: Is this year better than previous ones? If there have

indeed been shortcomings, how do we improve ourselves so that tomorrow is better than today, and the next year is better than the last?

In this regard, I would like to call upon everyone to ponder upon a reminder that Allah has set out in Surah Al-Hasyr, Verse 18:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ
وَآتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

Which means: *“O You who believe! Be mindful of God, and let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow; be mindful of God, for God is well aware of everything you do.”*

Dear brothers, the word *insan* in Arabic has roots that share the same meaning as ‘forgetfulness’. In fact, as a normal human being, we do not know everything and we are not free from error. It does not matter whether we hold a high post at our workplace or at any organisation, if we are an educator or a religious teacher, or whether we are husband, wife, father, or mother. The fact is that we do not know everything.

Therefore, as a human being, there are two things we ought to observe in our effort to improve ourselves.

Firstly: Accepting advice and being open to correction. And secondly: Constant self-reflection.

My dear brothers,

In accepting advice, sometimes we need someone to address our shortcomings and correct our mistakes, even when being open to correction is sometimes a bitter pill to swallow. This is especially when the correction or criticism comes from someone we do not know or someone we are not close to.

We should learn from the history of Rasulullah s.a.w., where we find him to be someone who was always open to opinions and suggestions from others.

Even though he is a Messenger and a leader of the community, he s.a.w. was ready to accept the opinions of his companions. This is because accepting others' viewpoints is not a sign of weakness, and it brings benefits to the individual who takes in the viewpoints. It is for this reason, scholars explain that the true meaning of giving advice is to want goodness for the person receiving it.

My dear brothers,

Rasulullah s.a.w. as a husband also did not shy away from asking for the opinions of his wives, and was ready to accept their viewpoints and feedback. He was reported to have sought opinion of his wives, Sayyidatina Khadijah and Sayyidatina

Ummu Salamah *radhiyallahu ‘anhuma*. In fact, when Rasulullah s.a.w. was frightened when he first received revelation (or *wahyu*) from Jibril a.s., Saiyidatina Khadijah r.a. was the one who offered him advice and the suggestion to seek help or to consult her cousin, Waraqah Bin Nawfal.

My dear brothers,

The second approach for a believer to strive in improving himself is by self-reflection.

Remember that the success of self-reflection is when the heart is cleansed and finds ease in performing Allah’s commands. The success of this reflection also means that we will find it easy to abstain from Allah’s prohibitions, as well as overcome our base desires and the lure of the devil. Meanwhile, the failure to reflect upon ourselves makes the soul heedless of Allah, and allows it to continue being involved in vices and immoral deeds. This is what is meant by the words of Allah in Surah Asy-Syams, verses 9 and 10:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ۝٩ ۝١٠

Which means: “*Verily, the one who purifies his soul (with good deeds) succeeds, and the one who corrupts his soul (with bad deeds) fails*”

Not only that, those who constantly reflect are also regarded as intelligent and wise by The Messenger s.a.w., whereas those who fail to assess their own weaknesses are regarded as weak and incapable of planning ahead, due to heedlessness and wishful thinking of attaining success in the hereafter. Rasulullah s.a.w.:

الْكَيْسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ، وَالْعَاجِزُ مَنْ أَتْبَعَ نَفْسَهُ هَوَاهَا
وَتَمَنَّى عَلَى اللَّهِ

Which means: *“The wise man is one who holds himself accountable and performs good deeds to prepare for what comes after death, whereas the foolish man is one who gives in to his lowly desires and seeks their indulgence from Allah.
.”* (HR Imam At-Tirmizi)

Therefore, let us constantly reflect upon ourselves. We should get other people’s feedback on ourselves by asking those who know us well like our family members and close friends.

Remember, dear brothers, when we are open to accepting feedback in positive manner, it will help us to be open in embracing constructive criticisms from thosewhom we may not know personally.

Let us together make the practice of reflecting upon ourselves as part of our lives. Hopefully, in doing so, it will help us to be

more equipped and empowered to change and improve ourselves, which will then help us to become servants beloved to Allah in the hereafter.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ يَا
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ يَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.