

Chapter Eight

KEEPING QUIET AND HOLDING OUR TONGUES

As Muslims we are held accountable for what we say and what we do. A good word goes a long way and has tremendous value and effect. In contrast, a bad word can cause a lot of damage and have undesirable bad effect. Therefore, thinking before talking, and only saying what is good and useful is a sign of maturity and faith in God

We will discuss the following concepts

- 1- We can cause a lot of harm with our tongues, therefore, we should keep quiet and only talk if we have something good to say**
- 2- The wrong things that we say may be a sin and will count against us on the Day of Judgment**
- 3- Vain talk is a waste of time**
- 4- We should not get involved in matters that are not our concern**

Say what is good, otherwise keep quiet

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicated that those who have faith keep quiet and only talk if they have something useful or something good to say:

(Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should say something good, or let him keep quiet; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him be good to his neighbor; and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honor his guest)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

We learn from this Hadeeth:

- Belief in Allah and in being accountable to Him should be confirmed with our actions
- In this tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) we are told that faith means saying something good or keeping quiet, and means being good to our neighbors, and also means honoring our guests
- In other words faith is not just words that we say, but faith is what we do in our interaction and dealings with others that shows whether we understand that one day we will account for what we did in our life: did we harm others with our tongues? did we treat our neighbors right or not? and did we honor our guests or make them feel unwelcome and want to leave?

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also explained that a Muslim does not harm others with his sayings or with his actions:

(The Muslim is the person who other Muslims fear no harm from his tongue or from his hand)

Narrated by Bokhari, Muslim and Termedhi.

This is the least that a Muslim can do: making other people feel safe and fear no harm from him, either in words or deeds. Obviously, a Muslim should do more than that: he or she should be good to his family, friends, colleagues at work and others in his community, and should help those who need his help, and should reach out to others and have a positive beneficial effect in his community.

The Qur'an orders those who have faith, and are motivated to serve God and gain His pleasure, to say what is good and not harmful, and understand the effect of bad words:

﴿ وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ

لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾ [الإسراء: ٥٣]

Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best: for Satan doth sow dissensions among them: for Satan is to man an avowed enemy.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 53

Satan's goal is to incite enmity and tempt us to say whatever we think of and what our emotions dictate, even in moments of anger. During these times, we can say things that are wrong, and that which we will regret later on. But once we have uttered the words it is too late for the damage is already done. Therefore, it is very important to think and consider before we say anything that we may regret later on, and we should control our emotions, particularly anger. The Qur'an explains the value, benefit and effect of good words and not returning an injury with injury, and not returning a bad word with another bad word:

﴿ وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ

عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ﴿۳۴﴾ [فصلت: ۳۴]

Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!

Fusselat 41 : 34

And:

﴿ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ ۗ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿۹۶﴾ [المؤمنون: ۹۶]

Repel evil with that which is best: We are well-acquainted with the things they say.

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 96

﴿ وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿۹۷﴾ [المؤمنون: ۹۷]

And say: "O my Lord! I seek refuge with Thee from the suggestions of the Evil Ones;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 97

We are encouraged to say what is good, and the Qur'an praises the "good word" and contrasts that to a "bad word":

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي

السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ [إبراهيم: ٢٤]

Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? A goodly Word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens,

Ibrahim 14 : 24

﴿ تُوْقَى أَكْلُهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ

يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ [إبراهيم: ٢٥]

It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition.

Ibrahim 14 : 25

﴿ وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

[إبراهيم: ٢٦]

And the parable of an evil Word is that of any evil tree: it is torn up by the root, from the surface of the earth: it has no stability.

Ibrahim 14 : 26

So what is meant by a good word?

A good word has many meanings and applications: it may mean reading the Qur'an or explaining its teachings to others so they are guided in their lives. It may also mean praising God and seeking His forgiveness. A good word also means saying good things that are true and make another person feel good, comfortable and content, or to give him hope and encouragement. A good word may involve asking forgiveness from others for what we have said or done. A good word may be reading the sayings of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and applying his teachings in our life, or explaining to others his Sunnah and how best they can apply his tradition in their life. A good word may be inviting others to Allah as the Qur'an explains:

﴿ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

[فصلت: ٣٣]

Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, "I am of those who bow in Islam?"

Fusselat 41 : 33

The Qur'an is Allah's good words:

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ
أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ [الزمر: ١٨]

Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding.

Az-Zumar 39 : 18

Praising Allah and acknowledging His blessings is saying good words:

﴿ وَتَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غَلٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي
هَدَانَا لِهَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ
وَنُودُوا أَنْ تِلْكَمُ الْجَنَّةُ أَوْرَثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ [الأعراف: ٤٣]

And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury - beneath them will be rivers flowing - and they shall say: "Praise be to Allah, Who hath guided us to this (felicity): never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah: indeed it was the truth that the Messengers of our Lord brought unto us." And they shall hear the cry: "Behold! the Garden before you! ye have been made its inheritors, for your deeds (of righteousness)."

Al-Araf 7 : 43

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us that praising Allah and glorifying Him counts heavily in our favor:

(Two words that are easy to say, yet beloved to Allah most gracious, and weigh heavily in our favor are: "Purified is Allah (Subhan Allah), and praise be to Him (wa behamdih), glory to Allah the most great (Subhan Allah Al-Azeem)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us that a good word counts in our favor and can protect us from Hell Fire:

(Protect yourselves from Hell Fire, even with half a date; if you do not find anything to give in charity, say a good word)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Obviously our actions and behavior must confirm our good words, otherwise our words are not accepted. The Qur'an explains that our deeds confirm our words and allows it to be accepted by Allah:

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا ۖ إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۖ وَمَكْرُ أُولَٰئِكَ هُوَ يُبْزَوُ ۖ﴾

[فاطر: ١٠]

If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belong all glory and power. To Him mount up (all) words of Purity: it is He Who exalts each Deed of Righteousness. Those that lay Plots of Evil, for them is a Penalty terrible; and the plotting of such will be void (of result).

Fatir 35 : 10

Our good words and our good actions allow us to enter paradise. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Spread the greetings, and say what is good, and keep close to your relations, and stand up in prayer at night while others are asleep, you will enter the paradise of your Lord in peace)

Narrated by Ahmad

What we say may be wrong and sinful and may count against us on the Day of Judgment

If we are not careful and talk without thinking we are going to make a lot of mistakes and will say many things that are not true. Sometimes, what we say is sinful and will count against us if we harm others or if we misguide them. We then incur not only our sin, but also the sin of those whom we misled and turned away from the way of God. The Qur'an warns us about secret talk or plotting against other people or plotting to hide the truth:

﴿ وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَفُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا ﴾ [النساء: ١٠٧]

[النساء: ١٠٧]

Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls; for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime;

An-Nesa'a 4 : 107

﴿ يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَىٰ مِنَ

الْقَوْلِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا ﴾ [النساء: ١٠٨]

They may hide (their crimes) from men, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah, seeing that He is with them when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve; and Allah doth compass round all that they do.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 108

And :

﴿ لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَن أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ

النَّاسِ ۗ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴾ [النساء: ١١٤]

[النساء: ١١٤]

In most of their secret talks there is no good; but if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men, (secrecy is permissible): to him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).

An-Nesa'a 4 : 114

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned us about the danger and harm that our tongues can cause and the sin that we accumulate via our tongue if we are not careful and hold our tongues:

(.. And is there anything that let people enter Hell head long and on their faces except what their tongues say?)

Narrated by Bokhari

He also said:

(Whoever guarantees what his tongue says, and what his private parts will do, I will guarantee for him paradise)

Narrated by Bokhari & Termedhi

Vain talk is a waste of time

Time is valuable. If we waste our time in gossip or in vain and useless talk we are the losers and we may incur sin at the same time. The Qur'an praises those who do not engage in vain or useless talk:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ﴾ [الفرقان: ٧٢]

Those who witness no falsehood and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honourable (avoidance);

Al-Furqan 25 : 72

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this concept further:

(Allah likes three things for you, and dislikes three things: He likes for you to worship Him alone and not worship others besides Him; And that you hold on to His religion; and that you do not become divided. And He dislikes for you vain and useless talk; and arguing and asking questions for no good reason; and wasting money)

Narrated by Muslim & Termedhi.

We learn from this saying of the Prophet:

- We should worship God alone and serve no one besides Him
- We should follow the religion of Islam and its guidelines
- We should stay united and avoid any divisions or sects
- We should avoid vain and useless talk
- We should avoid wasting money in wrong or useless vain pursuits
- We should not argue in vain or ask questions for no good reason

We should not get involved in matters that are not our concern

Those who have faith do not get involved in matters that are not their concern. In other words they do not spy on others, nor talk to others or actively pursue information that should remain private. They respect the rights of other people and their right to their privacy, and that their secrets not be divulged or made public. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained:

(Among the signs that indicates that a person's Islam is indeed good

Is that he leaves things alone and does not get involved in matters that are not his concern)

Narrated by Malik, Termedhi & Ibn Majja.

The Qur'an stresses the importance of not thinking ill of the motives of other people, and of not spying on them or saying bad things about them behind their back:

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَتُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾﴾ [الحجرات: ١٢]

O ye who believe! avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But fear Allah: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful.

Al-Hujerat 49 : 12

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