

CONTEMPLATING THE QUR'AN

Even though the Qur'an is the most widely read book today, it is also one of the least understood. The main reason for this unfortunate situation being the fact that the majority of Muslims read the Qur'an mainly for the purpose of getting blessings (*tabarruk*) while giving little or no attention to the far more important requirement of *contemplating* its meanings and message. More thoughts inside on Qur'an contemplation, its importance, nature, its different aspects, conditions and requirements.

By Gohar Mushtaq,

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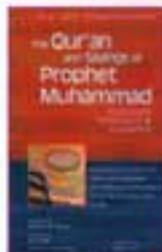
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The magazine contains some of Allah's names. Please do not show it to the youth. Enter keep circulation about us online.

Diffusing Disagreements

BY KIMBERLY BEN

Think back to your last big disagreement. Who was it with? A friend or co-worker? A spouse or parent? More than likely things started off as a neutral or even friendly discussion, but then somewhere along the way things went wrong.

Before you knew it, you were embroiled in a heated, emotional exchange filled with hurt feelings, wounded egos, and escalated tempers. Some disagreements can be easily worked out with no problems, while others can turn into years of individuals no longer on speaking terms.

Many believe that the best way to avoid nasty disagreements is to avoid conflict altogether. Even though conflicts are uncomfortable and unpleasant, they are actually important in the growth of relationships. Conflicts occur because someone feels that their needs are not being met. Maybe you are upset with your parents because you feel they cannot appreciate all the benefits of your choosing to attend a college eight states away, or your boss is frustrated because he believes that you do not see how being habitually late affects the company's productivity. Addressing the issue causing conflict gives each person the chance to express his or her needs and work together toward a peaceful resolution.

The Root of the Problem

More often than not, the cause of conflict is rooted in each individual's perception. If during the heat of a discussion someone perceives a threat (physical, emotional, power, etc.) to his or

her well-being, there is bound to be conflict. Our perceptions and reactions are the result of our values, culture, beliefs, information, experiences, and numerous other variables. Our responses during a disagreement represent our feelings and ideas, integral to the resolution of what is recognized as the perceived problem. The best way to begin resolving conflict is to control yourself and your own emotions in the heat of the moment, then try to understand the perceived threat that the other person is experiencing. It may seem ridiculous to you, but put yourself in the other person's shoes, so to speak. This requires active listening, which is not a simple thing to do, espe-

cially when you feel passionately about the point you are trying to make. Experts in conflict resolution suggest taking a deep, cleansing breath to relax. Taking a few moments to prepare to listen reduces the power of the emotional stranglehold that has you in its grip.

There are also triggers and predictable situations that are more likely to initiate conflict for some. It just might rub your newlywed cousin the wrong way whenever well-meaning family members quiz her about when she and her husband plan to start their family. In this situation, your cousin could react with anger because she feels pressured, while inquiring family members may simply be excited about what the future holds. Or you may seethe with anger whenever your parents compare your academic abilities with your older brother who excelled all of his classes. Your perception of their comments may be: "They think he is better than me!" However, their perceived point of view could be that they are using him as an example to motivate you. If you know what some of your triggers are, and take a moment to consider the other person's point of view, you can better manage stressful situations and conversations that could lead to unnecessary arguments.

If a situation occurs between you and another that ends up in conflict and anger, do not avoid it—deal with it.



“Say (O Prophet): Believe in it. Or disbelieve in it. Indeed, those who (are sincere, who) have already been given knowledge (of the Scriptures) before it, fall to the chin, bowing (their faces) down (to the ground before God), whenever it is recited to them. And they say: ‘Highly exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord, most surely, is ever fulfilled.’ Thus do they fall to the chin, weeping, for it (is a Heavenly Admonition that) increases then in devotion.”

[17:107-109]



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The Qur'an is a book of Divine origin; a book that was revealed as a guide on how to lead a good life in this world and achieve success in the Hereafter. Yet, great injustice is done to this book—even though the Qur'an is the most widely read book today, it is also one of the least understood. The main reason for this unfortunate situation being the fact that the majority of Muslims read the Qur'an mainly for the purpose of getting rewards from reciting it while giving little or no attention to the far more important requirement of contemplating its meanings and message.

It is for this reason that as Allah speaks of the covenant the receivers of the Qur'an have taken upon themselves to honor it, He also warns them that keeping that pledge may not be attainable for many of them. "Indeed, We did offer the trust to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were fearful of it. But man bore it (but will not be able to properly uphold). Indeed,

man is unjust (concerning his own trust) and ignorant (of the outcome)." [33:72]

In fact, many Muslims today have reduced the status of the Qur'an to that of a ceremonial book from which blessings on certain occasions are sought—at the time of buying a house, a marriage ceremony or on the event of someone's death. How pitiful is the state of affairs of Muslims. If we are not careful enough, our attitude towards, and ways of relating to, the Qur'an could become identical with the attitude and ways of those who received messages from God before us, an example the Qur'an explicitly warns us not to emulate. This is not the way the Companions of Prophet Muhammad, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, dealt with the Qur'an. Theirs was certainly a practical illustration of following God's command, an example of the way true Muslims should receive, glorify and use the Qur'an. "A most blessed Book have We sent down to you (O >>



On Extending the Borders of Sacred Space, Time, and Life

BY AMER HALEEM

"God 'from of old' has ordained the Ka'bah, the Sacred House 'in Makkah', 'to be' a cherished sanctuary 'of peace and security', for 'the future welfare and prosperity of' the people—and 'so too ordained' the Sacred Months, and the 'sacrificial' charitable-offerings, and the 'animals bearing' garlands 'that mark them for sacrifice'. This 'We reveal' that you may 'come to' know that God 'alone' knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and that 'from everlasting to everlasting' God is, indeed, all-knowing of all things." [5:97]

TAKE A SLOW read of our verse this month. Now read it again without the explanatory brackets. Go ahead. Do not let your mind go languid in the long summer heat.

Herein Allah declares three things sacrosanct: (1) The Ka'bah in Makkah; (2) the holy months (namely, the four Sacred Months of the Muslim lunar calendar, which are Thul Qi'dah, Thul Hijjah, Muharram, and Rajab, the eleventh, twelfth, first, and seventh months, respectively; and (3) the ani-

mals designated as food-charity for the poor and the pilgrims during Hajj.

Our verse is famous, of course. It cordons off the sacred with a handful of hallowed words for those making pilgrimage in its season. But when you went back and read it without the intervening explanations, you may have found it clear but sparse, stark. Most Muslims would immediately understand "The Ka'bah" as a geographic location and a place of peace, at least generally. However, "the Sacred Months"

many of us now remember only partially and vaguely. "The charitable offerings" strongly correlate with the food sacrifice for which our Eid at the end of the Pilgrimage is named (though perhaps many would no longer readily recognize the meaning or purpose of "the garlands" without explanatory help.

The fact that each of these ordained things accrues as a benefit "for the people" is crucial in the verse. If pressed to define to whom "the people" refers, a good number of us