

## A MOUNTAIN OF TRUTHFULNESS

BY KHERTA ABUBAKR

## QUR'AN

"[Indeed] they are not equal: the good deed and the evil deed. [So] repel (evil) with that which is best [in the sight of Allah]. Then behold! The one who had enmity for you, and for whom you had enmity, may become like a most intimate friend. Yet none shall retain this but those who are patient [in suffering]. And none shall retain this but one endowed with a magnificent share [of goodness]." [41:34]

## HADEETH

The Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, said, "No one who has even an atom's weight of pride will enter Paradise." A man asked him, "What if a man likes his clothes and shoes to look good?" (Meaning, is this counted as pride) The Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, replied, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride entails denying the truth and looking down upon other people." (Muslim)

## NOTABLE QUOTES

"People seek the truth not because it is gone astray, but because they are."  
—Abdullah ibn Awn

"Praise your friend publically, reproach him privately."  
—Arab Saying

"He who fears to climb the mountains will forever live between rocks and fissures."  
—Poet Bilqasim ash-Shabbi

"A hammer breaks glass, but forges steel."  
—Anonymous

*"May Allah shed mercy on you! By Allah! You were the first to believe of all the Ummah, and you made your belief the bedrock of your behavior and manners. You were the man of most excellent trust and conviction, most generous, and most caring for the Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam. You were ever the greatest supporter of Islam... And, in your manners, you were closest of all to the Prophet, himself"* — *The History of Islam*

THESE ARE THE words uttered by Ali ibn Abi Talib upon hearing the news of Abu Bakr's death. As he stood in the doorway of the man whom the Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, referred to as his most beloved, Ali shed tears.

*"You affirmed the Prophet when others denied him; you showed sympathy when others were ungenerous to him; you rose to help the Messenger of Allah when others held themselves back from help and support..."*

He stood medium in height, with brown skin, and a light beard that covered his face. His body was thin, deceptive as to the strength it carried inside it. His proper name was Abdullah ibn Uthman—the first man to accept the message of Islam, beloved of our most beloved Messenger, the Second of Two, as the Qur'an called him, the one who came to be known as Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, Father of Dawn's Light, the Truthful One.

His gentle disposition and upright character were well-known among the people of Makkah before Islam, a time when the whole of Arabia was steeped in the darkest type of ignorance. In a society in which men would bury their infant girls and the poor were treated less than human, his morality became proof of the possibility of a future to right the wrongs of the deep past. At the earliest point of Islam's history, it was Abu Bakr's immediate assent and sincerity of belief that led to the honor of having the Creator Himself testify to the purity of his intentions.

The Prophetic tradition teaches us that truthfulness is the defining characteristic

of belief, while dishonesty serves as the root from which disbelief grows. Thus Allah enjoins that believers be truthful in word and deed—that they not only love Allah in their hearts, but that this love translates into the God-fearing *taqwa* that benefits them and all things, animate and inanimate, around them.

Abu Bakr holds a lofty position in Islam, and there is no doubt that he reached this pinnacle due to his unwavering honor and commitment to truth. He was nicknamed 'As-Siddeeq,' or 'The Truthful One,' out of an incident that occurred when the Makkans belied the possibility of the Prophet's ascension to the Heavens. Small wonder that, after the death of the Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, it was he among all the community who stood tall to uphold the true meaning of Islam, bearing witness to truth with the words of the Qur'an: "Muhammad is but a Messenger; and messengers have passed away before him. Will you, then, when he dies or is slain, turn back on your heels (to faithlessness)?" [3:144]

The character of Abu Bakr was truthfulness in its purest form—truth that leads directly to the guidance and Mercy of Allah. It was, undoubtedly, Abu Bakr's closeness to the character of the Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, that led the Muslims *en masse* to pledge him their hands in allegiance so soon after the Prophet's demise. A mountain of truth, Abu Bakr not only stood up for the truth, but consistently affirmed it through his words and actions in his transactions with people in their daily lives.

The Sunnah teaches us that the path to Paradise is facilitated for those who hold fast to this quality. "Truthfulness is certainty and tranquility, while lying is doubt and confusion" (Tirmithi).

As we attempt, some 1400 years later, to navigate through the confusion that surrounds our modern lives, let us hold fast to the examples of these great men, whom in their desire to please the Unseen, discovered His never-ending Mercy. ▲

# ON BEING LOVING: Two Peas in a Fighter Jet Pod

BY MARRYAM HALEEM

**T**HEY SAY I used to adore him. So they say. My childhood is bright and happy enough that I believe them. As for myself, I only have faintly glimmering recollections of half-formed feelings. We must have passed quickly into calm impersonal indifference, that sort of tense stillness before a storm hits. And hit, it did.

Hostilities began between my older brother and I around the time I was 14, putting him at 16. One of my sharpest memories of these battlements is me screeching like a banshee, brandishing a broom in the air like the Sword of Death, chasing him around the kitchen, vowing, in super-sonic wavelengths that I would kill him. But before everyone takes his side, let me explain: He was teasing me. And I cannot abide teasing.

So that's how the wars began. Him teasing (looking back now, he probably was trying to get my attention,

elicit any reaction out of me. And he did!) and me exploding like a bunch of cluster bombs and running for the broom (psychologically, I do not know why I always went for the broom as opposed to other objects). This went on for a few more years. We had cease-fires and peace conferences that were probably just as effective as the ones happening between countries now (and lasting around the same amount of time, too).


I can look back and laugh at most of those memories now, except for

the fact that as we got older it became uglier. Resentment grew. I had no patience with or for him. It got to the point where I could not sit down and have a decent (forget friendly) conversation with him. My understanding of the Qur'an was good enough to know that I was breaching my Lord's commandments. Being good to family is a huge thing in Islam. Okay. Great. So, what? Then what?

Clearly none of my Qur'anic knowledge prevented me from going from a state of blissful serenity to a state of murderous, blinding, white-hot rage in less than 2-seconds flat. But I've come to a piece of wisdom, in my ripe old age of 22: The world we live in is merely a haze of abstract objects and postulations. We grasp, gasp, and drown in this sea of ideation. The only thing that will save us is actualization of those high ideals and mundane ideas. It's action. And action begins with the heart, not the hand (come on, that's brilliant right? And I came up with it all by myself).

For me, in this particular problem (I flatter myself, for I have many), I was stuck in a conceptual quagmire called love. You see, I did love my brother. Theoretically. But true love is not a feeling. It's an action (this piece of wisdom is not from me. I'm lifting it, but I can't remember from whom).

When I was told (many times, I might add) to "be loving" to my brother, I often (always) responded in irate indignation. To me, lost in the

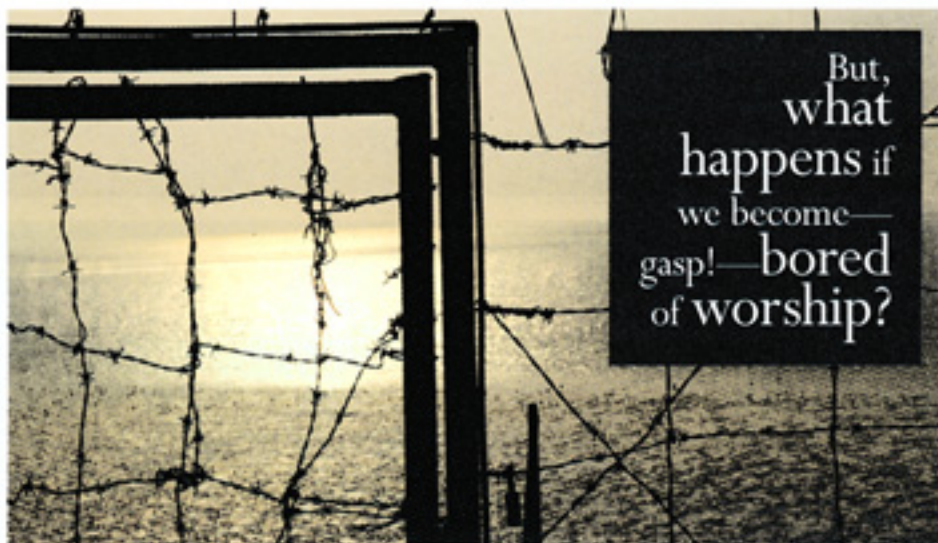


My goal in all this is to not break any more brooms over any boy's head. They are much too valuable (to which object that pronoun refers, I'll leave for you to decide).

# I'm Bored!

BY SOBIA ASRAR

SUMMER BRINGS WITH it, not just heat waves and ice cream treats, but also the ruckus of hollering children running around aimlessly. After 36-plus weeks of besting other parents in science fairs, PTA meetings, and field trip chaperoning, the end of the school year finds mom and dad relaxing, right? Not quite. Rather most are meticulously sifting through youth camp and summer classes brochures.



No doubt they do this out of genuine love for their children. But any parent will good-naturedly admit what is nothing less than common knowledge. This is also done in large measure to avoid the dreaded whine: "I'm bored!"

Boredom is that feeling borne of the absence of anything—or, more specifically, anything interesting—to do. Everyone is predisposed to ennui once in a while, some more than others, or so psychologists' Boredom Proneness Scale tests report to us. Many a parent has beheld the disaster that boredom can wreak among idle children. And

researchers say the same about adults. Boredom is dangerous.

None of us seek boredom, and yet it exists. Take up new interests to stave it off, they tell us. This will stimulate the mind and hone our ability to focus, lift us out of the rut that has become our lives.

But, what happens if we become—gasp!—bored of worship?

I could be expedient and reward, but the fact is we do find our minds wandering during khutbahs and our souls sidelining faith in our lives. The Prophet, sallallahu alayhe wa sallam, as narrated by the Companion Ibn

Masoud, himself addressed the former. He "would take care of [people] in preaching by selecting a suitable time so [they] might not get bored." (Bukhari)

So, it is not such an outrageous notion, after all. What is startling, though, is that for as far back as we can remember, whether it is the awkward *sajdahs* of our toddler days, or our tiny hands desperately trying to wear mom's hijabs, Islam has been ingrained in us.

And despite, or perhaps in spite of, how accustomed to worship we are, growing up in a world of shorter attention spans and evolving styles of just about everything has turned our religious practices into the unadventurous and tedious. Fast-paced video games and other activities have captured our interest, forcing things like *salah* to become a chore.

We may have continued to follow Islam as we ever have, partly under pressure from family and society, but in haste and with disinterest.

Now, we could blame the elders for forcing the *deen* down our throats or be condemned by them for our unforgivable sin. But if we are to pinpoint the source of the problem, it is not that we have tired of Islam, and harbor no love for and waning interest in





## II. PATTERNS OF CONTROL AND CAUSES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

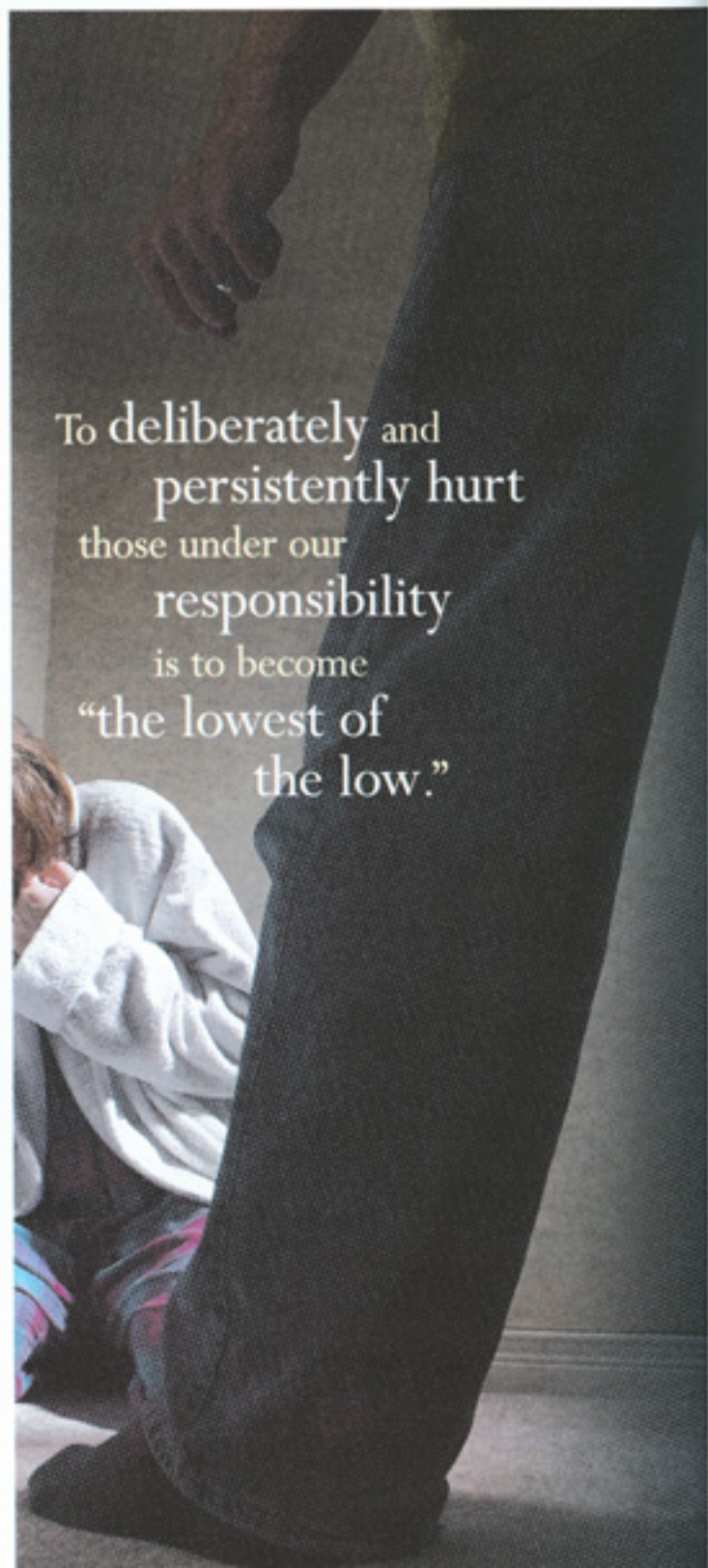
**S**POUSAL ABUSE DOES not happen simply because some people lose their temper and get angry, as it is often misunderstood. It is a pattern of control that occurs when people use their physical and financial power or their spouse's weakness to humiliate and mistreat them. God has made humans differ in their wealth, physical power, and other capacities, as a way to test them. Injustice occurs when they use any of these advantages to injure, debase, and oppress others. Injustice is most hated by God, but the worst and most despicable of these injustices is the kind that one perpetrates against those closest to him and most deserving of his love and compassion. God Almighty says: "We have created man in the best mold, and then rejected him to the lowest of the low" [96:4-5]. To deliberately and persistently hurt those under our responsibility is to become "the lowest of the low." Domestic abuse, therefore, is more complex than notions of anger management suggest. Abusers are typically abusive only toward their family while to the outside world, they often appear to have good character and control. Domestic abuse is about controlling, manipulating, and humiliating one's spouse. Abusers harness all their anger and frustration at the outside world and direct it at their spouse.

### AN UGLY JUSTIFICATION FOR ABUSE

**M**odern cultural theorists have long seen societies as texts. In this analogy acts and performance are like words in a book. We know, for instance, that in the English language the word 'hit' in varied contexts assumes many meanings unrelated to its more common meaning. Figuratively, it could be part of "hit a home run," which for Americans, means to be successful. "Hit home" means to be completely understood. To "hit on his favorite book" means to mention his favorite book, and so on. What we may understand less is that acts also acquire different connotations of meaning and value according to their various socio-cultural contexts.

The act, say, of raising your index finger could mean you wish to witness God's oneness in salah, to point at someone in the classroom, to warn someone at the point of contention, to ask someone to wait for a minute, and so forth. Kissing someone of your own gender on the cheek

is often considered a polite, if not necessary, gesture of friendliness in some cultures, such as the Middle East. In some Western cultures, it is inappropriate and offensive, even a sign of obscenity. Americans consider the act of men hugging women as a sign of closeness and friendliness, with no lascivious connotations. But the inhabitants of the 19th century Western world would have found this



To deliberately and persistently hurt those under our responsibility is to become "the lowest of the low."

# Al-Hasan Al-Basri

## *A Model of Early Islamic Spirituality*

BY UWAYMIR ANJUM

**C**ONNECTING MEN AND women to their Creator and Cherisher is the primary goal of Islam. All the messages that Allah, the Almighty, has sent down have had no purpose but this. The laws of Allah in the various Heavenly books are intended to facilitate this goal alone. The laws are means, not an end, in the sense that men and women who believed in God's prophets and died before performing any act of obedience, so long as they had the willingness to do so, are believers, rewarded by their Lord in the Hereafter.

The only condition for success, according to the Qur'an, is *eman*, faith and trust in God, and belief in the messengers and the Hereafter. The worldly strictures of the Shari'ah are intended ultimately for nothing but strengthening, assisting, and maintaining men's faith in God. While knowledge, elaboration, and systematization of these laws has been a central concern of all Muslim scholars and thinkers—in the form of *fiqh*—concern for the ultimate goal of *eman* is superior to anything else.

Imam al-Hasan al-Basri has become a legend in Islamic tradition for his piety, piercing exhortation, asceticism, and sincerity—in short, for the knowledge of *eman* which he both preached and put into practice. He has the distinction of being the earliest scholar whose psychological and spiritual insights and teachings about *zuhd*, asceticism, or self-denial as a principled way of life, have reached us in depth. All sciences of Islam

begin with exegesis (*tafseer*) of the Qur'an, and there is no exegesis that is not indebted to the teachings and narrations of al-Hasan al-Basri. He is one of the main bridges between the scholarship of the Companions and other Successors to the later generations, and hence his spiritual as well as legal opinions inform all Islamic sciences.

Al-Hasan was born in Madinah in the year 21 Hijrah—when many of the Companions were still alive and Madinah was the center of the Righteous Caliphate. His father was a prisoner of war during the Islamic conquest of the land of Iraq during the reign of the Second Caliph, Umar ibnul Khattab (d. 23 AH). Some historians report that his father's name was Peroz. Others hold that it was Yasar. His father became an emancipated servant of the Companion Zaid ibn Thabit (d. 45 AH) and was brought to Madinah, where he married a woman named Khayrah and they were blessed with al-Hasan. The greatest early distinction of al-Hasan is perhaps that he was associated with and may have been brought up in the household of the Mother of the Believers, Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her.

At the age of 21, after the battle of

