

## Live Like a Mirror

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أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ط

*Call towards the path of your Rabb with wisdom and good admonition. (16:125)*

This is the order of Allāh ta‘ālā to every believer. Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam spent his entire life calling towards the Path of Allāh ta‘ālā with the concern that every single human being should be saved from the fire of Jahannam and granted entry into Jannah. Out of this concern, he continuously instructed and taught people to do good and refrain from evil.

As followers of Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam, we also need to adopt this concern for our Muslim brothers and sisters and our fellow human beings. We should ask ourselves: “How can I help others to follow the Straight Path, reach Allāh ta‘ālā, acquire entry into Jannah and secure refuge from the Fire of Jahannam?”

### **Be a Mirror**

Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam has said:

“ *A believer is a mirror for [another] believer. (Abū Dāwūd)*

When you stand in front of a mirror it shows your physical appearance. It reveals what is good about the way you look as well as any defects you may have. In this hadīth, Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam instructs every believer to be like a mirror for other believers. A number of important points can be derived from this hadīth:

1. If you witness another believer behaving incorrectly, you should inform him, for you are a mirror for

him and a mirror points out the defects of the one who stands in front of it. However, a mirror reveals the faults very quietly, without bringing disgrace; you should do the same too.

2. A mirror does not only reveal physical defects but also physical beauty. Similarly, when advising a fellow believer, you should highlight his mistakes in the overall context of his good attributes, an approach that is more palatable to the one being advised and less likely to breed resentment. Take the example of someone who performs sajdah in a manner contrary to the Sunnah: inform him of his mistake after commending him on the correctness of the rest of his salāh.

3. Just as you are a mirror for other believers, every other believer is also a mirror for you. So every Muslim is simultaneously a mirror and a person standing in front of a mirror; an advisor and one who is advised.

4. If a mirror reveals a defect in your appearance, you may be upset but you will not feel resentment or anger towards the mirror. Similarly, when another Muslim adopts the role of a mirror and advises you of something you are doing wrong, you should not get offended. Why should we take offence when someone points out a shortcoming in us that, if left unattended would make us unsuccessful at the time of death, in the grave and on the Day of Qiyāmah? Instead, we should be happy.

In fact, it is only those who have love and concern for us that will go to the trouble of informing us of our shortcomings.

The Sharī‘ah commands us to point out the mistakes of a fellow brother in a polite manner, tactfully, with wisdom and concern. However, even if someone were to point out a fault impolitely, we should still not take offence and still be happy that he helped save us from harm in the hereafter. If we were walking along a path and about to fall into a hole and someone shouted in an impolite way for us to stop, we would thank him and be grateful and indebted to him for saving us, despite his manner.

Shaykh Qārī Siddīq Bandwi rahimahullāh was a great scholar and a very pious saint. He treated me with a lot of love and affection and I had the privilege of accompanying him when he was here on his one and only visit to the UK, during the latter days of his life. In a talk in Walsall he said: “Assume you have two doors to your house, one at the front and one at the back, and you only ever use the front door. One day, your neighbour is in his garden when he notices a huge crack in the back wall of your house. He then knocks on your door and tells you about the structural damage to your house, and advises you to tend to it without delay. Will you feel happy he told you or unhappy? Will you feel indebted to him or not?” We all answered that we would be happy and indebted to him. The Shaykh continued: “If someone sees a structural problem in our spiritual and religious ‘building’, and says e.g. that ghībah is harām and will bring our spiritual structure down, why do we feel offended?”

### **Concern for Self-Rectification**

Our mashāyikh have mentioned that while being concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of others, we should always be concerned about our self-rectification too. A person who is particular about his

appearance will often be seen standing before a mirror. Those who are concerned about their spiritual rectification and purifying themselves from any religious mistakes will also be seen ‘standing before the mirror’ by asking their friends to point out any shortcomings and highlight any room for rectification they see. The fact is, at times we cannot see our own faults and it takes someone else to point them out to us.

‘Umar al-Fārūq radhiyallāhu ‘anhu had great concern for his self-rectification, despite his eminent status and despite having been given the glad tidings of Jannah by Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam on numerous occasions. A question he once asked Hudhayfah ibn Yamān radhiyallāhu ‘anhu reflects this concern. Hudhayfah radhiyallāhu ‘anhu was known as Sāhibu Sirri Rasūlillāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam, i.e. one to whom Rasūlullāh confided certain information that no one else knew. One such piece of information was the names of those among the Muslims who were actually hypocrites. ‘Umar radhiyallāhu ‘anhu, concerned about his own standing in the eyes of Allāh ta‘ālā, once asked whether his own name was among the list of hypocrites, upon which Hudhayfah radhiyallāhu ‘anhu assured him it was not.

### **Four Ways to Self-Rectification**

Our mashāyikh have explained that there are four ways through which a person can rectify himself:

1. The best way, is to find a shaykh. Hand yourself over to him and give him full liberty to carry out your spiritual rectification in the way he sees fit. Normally, complete rectification is not possible without the guidance of a shaykh. However, until you find a shaykh, adopt one of the following three methods (these methods are also beneficial for those who have a shaykh):
2. When you see someone doing something wrong, reflect immediately on your own life and question yourself whether you are free of that shortcoming or not.
3. Keep your ears open to what your enemies say about you. It is part of life that people have enemies, those who dislike them and talk about them. You should reflect on the faults they perceive in you, and if those faults truly exist, they should be rectified.
4. Tell your friends to act as mirrors and notify you of any faults they see in you.