The Importance of Good Character

15-minute standard · Free English Friday sermon

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First Khutbah — Arabic Opening

Innal hamda lillah,
nahmaduhu wa nasta‘eenuhu wa nastaghfiruhu,
wa na‘oodhu billahi min shuroori anfusina
wa min sayyi’aati a‘maalina. ▶ Audio

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا.

Man yah-dihi-llahu falaa mudilla lah,
wa man yud-lil falaa haadiya lah. ▶ Audio

مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضْلِلْ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.

Wa ash-hadu an laa ilaaha illallahu wahdahu laa shareeka lah,
wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasooluh. ▶ Audio

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Yaa ay-yuhal-ladheena aamanut-taqul-laha haqqa tu-qaa-tihi
wa laa tamootunna illaa wa antum muslimoon. ▶ Audio

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Yaa ayyuhan-naasu-ttaqu rabbakumul-ladhee khalaqakum min nafsin waahidah,
▶ Audio

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ،

wa khalaqa minhaa zawjahaa,
wa baththa minhumaa rijaalan katheeran wa nisaa’aa. ▶ Audio

وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا، وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً.

Wattaqullahal-ladhee tasaa’aloona bihi wal-arhaam.
Innallaha kaana ‘alaykum raqeebaa. ▶ Audio

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا.

Yaa ayyuhalladheena aamanu-ttaqullaha wa qooloo qawlan sadeedaa. ▶ Audio

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا.

Yuslih lakum a‘maalakum wa yaghfir lakum dhunoobakum. ▶ Audio

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ.

Wa man yuti‘illaha wa rasoolahu faqad faaza fawzan ‘azeemaa. ▶ Audio

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا.

Ammaa ba‘d. ▶ Audio

أَمَّا بَعْدُ.

Fa inna asdaqal hadeethi kitaabullah, ▶ Audio

فَإِنَّ أَصْدَقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ،

wa khayral hadyi hadyu Muhammadin sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, ▶ Audio

وَخَيْرَ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ،

wa sharral umoori muh-dathaa-tuhaa,
wa kulla muh-dathatin bid‘ah,
wa kulla bid‘atin dalaalah,
wa kulla dalaalatin fin-naar. ▶ Audio

وَشَرَّ الْأُمُورِ مُحْدَثَاتُهَا، وَكُلَّ مُحْدَثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلَّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلَّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ.

First Khutbah — English

My dear brothers in Islam,

I advise myself first, and then all of you, to have taqwa of Allah.

Fear Allah, be aware of Allah, and remember that one day we will stand before Him and answer for how we lived our lives.

Today's khutbah is about something that should be part of every Muslim's life.

Something that affects our families, our friendships, our communities, and even the way people see Islam.

Good character.

My dear brothers in Islam,

When we think about being a good Muslim, we often think about salah, fasting, reading the Quran and giving charity.

And all of these are very important.

But there is something else we must never forget.

The way we treat other people is also part of our religion.

A person may pray five times every day.

He may fast every Ramadan.

He may regularly attend the masjid.

But if he constantly lies, insults people, loses his temper and treats his family badly, then something is seriously wrong.

Our worship should help us become better people.

It should make us more honest, more patient, more forgiving and more careful about how we behave.

My dear brothers in Islam,

The Prophet Muhammad, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam, taught us how important good character is.

In Sahih al-Bukhari, (Hadith 3559), the Prophet, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam, said:

"The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and character."

Think about that.

The best among us are not necessarily the wealthiest.

Not those who have the most important jobs.

And not those who are most respected by people.

Good character is one of the qualities that makes a person truly honourable.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Allah also praises the character of the Prophet Muhammad, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam.

In Surah Al-Qalam, (verse 4), Allah says:

"truly you have a strong character"

If we want to follow the example of the Prophet, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam, then we must pay attention to the way he treated people.

His example was not only about prayer and worship.

It was also about mercy, honesty, patience and kindness.

And these are qualities that every one of us should be trying to develop.

My dear brothers in Islam,

One of the first places where our character is tested is inside our own homes.

Sometimes, a person is polite and respectful to everyone outside.

He smiles at his friends.

He speaks kindly to his customers.

He is patient with his colleagues at work.

But when he returns home, he becomes a completely different person.

He raises his voice at his wife.

He becomes angry with his children over small things.

And he speaks to his parents in a way that he would never speak to a stranger.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Our families deserve our good character just as much as anyone else.

In fact, they should be among the first people to experience it.

Our spouses should not have to fear our temper.

Our children should not feel frightened to speak to us.

And our parents should not feel that they are a burden.

Being a good Muslim means showing kindness even when we are tired, stressed or having a difficult day.

This does not mean we will never become upset.

But it does mean that we must try to control how we respond.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Another important part of good character is controlling our anger.

Sometimes, someone says something that upsets us.

We immediately raise our voice.

We say things that we later regret.

And sometimes, a small disagreement becomes a serious argument.

But what have we gained?

Perhaps we won the argument.

Perhaps we made the other person stop speaking.

But we may also have hurt someone we love.

The Prophet Muhammad, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam, gave us a powerful lesson in Sahih al-Bukhari, (Hadith 6114).

He explained that real strength is not simply being able to overpower another person.

Real strength is being able to control ourselves when we are angry.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Think about how different our homes would be if we followed this advice.

A husband becomes upset but chooses to speak calmly.

A parent becomes frustrated but corrects the child without insulting them.

Two friends disagree but remain respectful.

And when someone makes a mistake, we give them the opportunity to apologise.

This is good character.

My dear brothers in Islam,

We should also be careful about the way we speak to people who cannot do anything for us.

How do we treat the person serving us at a restaurant?

How do we speak to someone cleaning the masjid?

How do we behave towards a worker who has made a mistake?

Do we show patience?

Or do we think that because we are paying someone, we have the right to speak to them however we want?

My dear brothers in Islam,

Good character means treating people with respect, regardless of their wealth, position or background.

The person you are speaking to is a human being with feelings, worries and responsibilities.

Perhaps they are having a difficult day.

Perhaps they are struggling with problems you know nothing about.

A little patience and kindness can make an enormous difference.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Good character is also about honesty.

It means telling the truth even when lying would be easier.

It means keeping our promises.

It means being fair when dealing with money.

And it means not taking advantage of someone simply because we have the opportunity.

A Muslim should be someone that people can trust.

If we borrow money, we should make every effort to repay it.

If we agree to do a job, we should do it properly.

And if we make a mistake, we should admit it rather than blame someone else.

Our words and actions should reflect our faith.

My dear brothers in Islam,

Today, good character is also tested through our phones.

Sometimes, people write things online that they would never dare say to someone face to face.

They insult others.

They make fun of people's appearance.

They spread rumours.

And they leave hurtful comments simply because they disagree with someone.

But being behind a screen does not remove our responsibility before Allah.

Our behaviour online is still part of our character.

In Surah Al-Hujurat, (verse 11), Allah tells us:

"do not speak ill of one another; do not use offensive nicknames for one another."

This command applies to our everyday conversations, and it also applies to what we write and share online.

My dear brothers in Islam,

We should also remember that good character does not mean being weak.

It does not mean allowing people to cheat us or harm our families.

We can stand up for our rights.

We can correct wrongdoing.

And we can disagree with someone.

But we should do these things with fairness and without unnecessary cruelty.

In Surah Fussilat, (verse 34), Allah teaches us to respond to evil with what is better.

Allah says:

"Good and evil cannot be equal."

This reminds us that we do not always need to respond to bad behaviour with more bad behaviour.

Sometimes, a calm response can prevent a serious argument.

Sometimes, forgiving someone can protect a relationship.

And sometimes, refusing to insult another person shows far greater strength than insulting them back.

My dear brothers in Islam,

There is another important reason why we should take good character seriously.

Our behaviour can influence the way others understand Islam.

A non-Muslim may know very little about the Quran or the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam.

But they may know you.

They may work beside you.

They may be your neighbour.

Or they may deal with you in business.

If you are honest, respectful and kind, they may become interested in learning more about Islam.

But if you are dishonest, rude or unfair, they may develop a negative view of our religion because of your behaviour.

My dear brothers in Islam,

We should be careful that our actions do not turn people away from the beautiful teachings of Islam.

And we should never forget that good character begins with our own efforts.

It is easy to notice the faults of others.

But today, let us examine ourselves.

Am I patient with my family?

Am I honest in my dealings?

Do I speak respectfully when I am upset?

And do I treat people well even when nobody important is watching?

May Allah forgive us for the times we have hurt others.

May Allah protect our tongues from insults, lies and harsh words.

May Allah help us become patient, honest and kind.

And may Allah bless us with good character in our homes and communities, Ameen.

End of First Khutbah — Asking for Forgiveness

Aqoolu qawlee haadhaa,
wa astaghfirullaha lee wa lakum,
wa li saa'i-ril muslimeena min kulli dhanb.
Fastaghfirooh, innahu huwal ghafoorur raheem. ▶ Audio

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ،
فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

Sit briefly between the two khutbahs.

Second Khutbah — Arabic Opening

Alhamdulillahi rabbil ‘aalameen, was-salaatu was-salaamu ‘alaa ashrafil anbiyaa’i wal mursaleen, nabiyyinaa Muhammadin, wa ‘alaa aalihi wa sahbihi ajma‘een.

▶ Audio

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.

Ash-hadu an laa ilaaha illallahu wahdahu laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasooluh. Ammaa ba‘d. ▶ Audio

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ.

Second Khutbah — English

My dear brothers in Islam,

Again, I advise myself and all of you to have taqwa of Allah.

We have spoken about the importance of good character.

But now we need to ask ourselves:

How can we become better Muslims through the way we treat others?

My dear brothers in Islam,

The first thing we can do is begin with our families.

When you return home today, make an effort to speak kindly.

Show appreciation to your spouse.

Give your children your attention.

And if you have hurt someone in your family, do not allow pride to stop you from apologising.

Sometimes, a sincere apology can repair a relationship that has been damaged for a long time.

The second thing we can do is become more careful with our words.

Before speaking, ask yourself whether what you are about to say is helpful or hurtful.

If someone makes a mistake, correct them without embarrassing them.

If someone asks for advice, give it with kindness.

And if you have nothing good to say, sometimes silence is the better choice.

My dear brothers in Islam,

The third thing we can do is practise patience.

When someone upsets you, do not immediately respond in anger.

Give yourself a moment.

Think about what you are about to say.

And remember that a few seconds of patience may save you from years of regret.

My dear brothers in Islam,

We should also teach our children good character through our example.

Teach them to say please and thank you.

Teach them to tell the truth.

Teach them to respect their parents, teachers and elderly people.

And teach them not to make fun of others.

But most importantly, let them see these qualities in us.

Children learn good manners more easily when they see good manners being practised at home.

My dear brothers in Islam,

The Prophet Muhammad, Sallahu Alayhi wa Salam, taught us in Jami at-Tirmidhi, (Hadith 2002), that good character carries great weight on the scales of deeds on the Day of Judgment.

Think about this.

A kind word.

An honest action.

An apology.

Or choosing to remain patient when we are angry.

These may seem like small things.

But in the sight of Allah, they can carry great reward.

My dear brothers in Islam,

One day, we will stand before Allah and answer for our actions.

We will answer for how we worshipped Him.

And we will also answer for how we treated the people He placed in our lives.

So let us make a sincere effort to become Muslims whose character reflects their faith.

Muslims who are honest when dealing with others.

Patient when facing difficulties.

Kind towards their families.

And respectful towards everyone.

Let our good character be something that brings people closer to Islam, not something that pushes them away.

May Allah improve our character and forgive our shortcomings.

May Allah make our homes places of kindness and mercy.

May Allah protect us from anger, pride and harshness.

May Allah guide our children to become people of good manners and strong faith.

And may Allah grant us beautiful character and admit us into Jannah, Ameen.

Closing Dua — Arabic Transliteration

In-nal-laaha wa ma-laaa-e-ka-ta-hoo yu-sal-loo-na 'alan-na-bee,
yaaa ay-yu-hal-la-thee-na aa-ma-noo sal-loo 'a-lay-hi wa sal-li-moo tas-lee-maa.

▶ Audio

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ، يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا.

Allah humma Sali wa salam wa barik ala Muhammadin wa ala alley Muhammad

▶ Audio

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ.

Allahummaghfir lil-muslimeena wal-muslimaat, wal-mu'mineena wal-mu'minaat, al-ahyaa'i minhum wal-amwaat. ▶ Audio

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، الْأَحْيَاءِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْأَمْوَاتِ.

Rabbanaa zalamnaa anfusanaa, wa illam taghfir lanaa wa tarhamnaa, lanakoonanna minal-khaasireen. ▶ Audio

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.

Rabbanaa aatinaa fid-dunyaa hasanah, wa fil-aakhirati hasanah, wa qinaa 'adhaaban-naar. ▶ Audio

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ.

Final Khutbah Closing — Arabic Transliteration

Ibaadallah,
innallaha ya’muru bil-‘adli
wal-ihsaani
wa eetaa’i dhil-qurbaa,
wa yanhaa ‘anil fahshaa’i wal-munkari wal-baghy.
Ya‘izukum la‘allakum tadhakkaroon. ▶ Audio

عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ، وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ، يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ.

Wa akhiroo da3wanal humdoolilahi rubul Alameen.
Wa Aqimis-salaah. ▶ Audio

وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ.