



Title: [“You Have Known. Be Steadfast.”](#)

DVD title: (the same)

9 Takbirs

Asalaam Aleikum wa Rahmatullah-e wa Barakatuh

Allahu Akbar kabira. Wa yl hamdu liyllahi kathira. Wa subhana yllahi bukratan wa asila.

Asalaam Aleikum wa Rahmatullah-e wa Barakatuh.

**Allah is Supremely Great, immensely so! And praise be to Allah, abundantly!
And Glory be to Allah, both early and late.**

Asalaam Aleikum wa Rahmatullahe wa Barakatuh.

Anas ibn Malik (ra) said the Prophet (sa) said,

...in the early morning of the day of breaking the fast, Allah *Subhanallah wa ta'ala* will give His angels their instructions. In obedience to His command, they will promptly fly down to the earth, where they will position themselves at the street corners and the crossroads, proclaiming in a voice that is audible to all created beings, apart from the jinn and humankind, “O community of Mohammed come forth into the presence of your Lord Who accepts the smallest offering, bestows the greatest abundance, and forgives the most terrible sin!”

Then, once the believers have emerged and presented themselves at their place of prayer (*musalla*), performed their prayers, and offered their supplications, the Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He) will make

sure that they are left with no need that He has not satisfied, no request that He has not answered, and no sin that He has not forgiven. They will then return to their homes, knowing that they have been granted forgiveness.

Inna fee dhaalika laaa'ayaatil-li-l-mutawassimeen

“Surely! In this are the signs for those who see” (15:75)

**SANA: SUBHANAKA ALLAHUMMA WA BIHUMDIKA WA TABARAKAS
MUKA WA TAALA JADDUKA WA LA ILAHA GHAIROKA**

...and reluctance and sadness at the departure of Ramadan our beloved guest. Indeed, this month is a great gift and blessing of Allah (swt), and another year of our lives has passed in worship, striving in service and submission to Allah's Will. Whether or not we were or are cognizant of the Divine Presence in each moment, we are nonetheless alive, working and breathing by the Divine Mercy in the Divine Mercy. Lest we forget, Rasūlullāh (sal) was sent to us as a mercy from Allah (swt).

We feel reluctance [in Ramadan's departure], because we have had the opportunity to fast, to retreat into the inner recesses of our hearts, minds and bodies. We have been blessed to have glimpses of the dimensions of life and its challenges, [glimpses of] our abilities and disabilities, and have been blessed to reaffirm our commitment to Allah (swt) and to ourselves. Now the temptation of daily life's demands and the possibility of subordinating our experiences in our spiritually oriented schedule to other influences begin to raise its not so beautiful face. During the month of Ramadan, Allah has kept the doors of hell closed, and the angels have been among us. Now it is up to us to keep lock and key on those doors, and remain in contact with the angels of His Mercy. Indeed, there were days for some, even in the month of Ramadan, with all the assistance of the

Almighty, when Shaytan tried to pry open the doors and awaken the memories of previous months. We cannot take this lightly. We must resist with all our hearts and souls the tendencies to undermine our gains, even if we do not recognize those gains, and even if we doubt that gains have been made. We must affirm and renew our reliance on Allah (swt) throughout our days and our nights.

It is said, as you know, and I like to repeat this every year, that this celebration of breaking fast came to be called Eid, because Allah (swt) restores joy and happiness (*ya'idu*) to His Servants on this day. It is very important to realize that the nouns *eid* and *awayat* as well as the verbs *ardu* and *udu* are all derived from the same root, which means to return, to do something again. It means to go to a place of returning – home, usually – to bring back, to relinquish, to restore. That's what this day's intention is for the rest of the year. Certainly, the return of Ramadan year after year to our homes and our hearts is also meant. Our relinquishing of our former lifestyle, habits, desires and actions, in order to return to our homes in our hearts and our souls, to restore ourselves, bears ample witness to the real meaning and the inner meaning of the Eid.

As you know, there are other explanations in history, among the scholars and believers, of the derivation of why this day came to be called Eid. One is that it brings the benefits, the *awad*, the favors and advantages that come from our investment of time and effort during this month. Such blessings come from Allah (swt). Some say that one has returned from obeying Allah directly to obeying the Messenger (sal), from the *fard* practices to the Sunnah, from the fast of Ramadan to the fast of the six days of Shawwal. The Ummah are told simply to return to your homes knowing that you have repented and Allah has forgiven you. Whatever the interpretation, the experience of the sincere individual is clear, and indeed becomes clearer each year, *inshā'a-LLāh*.

There is and should be cause for celebration and gift-giving, not out of cultural tradition, but in remembrance of the gifts of the Almighty that have flowed to us during this month,

and in remembrance in our hearts of the love and dependency we have had for one another. The gifts that are here now, that we will open and benefit from as the days go by; the gifts that we will come to realize a long time from now, *inshā'a-llāh*; the gifts that await us in the *akhirah*, these are the real gifts of the Eid. On this day, Allah created the Garden of Paradise. On the day of breaking the fast, Yawma Fitr, He planted the Tree of Tubha/Bliss, with its roots in Paradise, its leaves extending downward to the earth. Some say that one of its branches will enter the mansion of each inhabitant of the Garden of Paradise, bearing flowers and ripe fruit of every imaginable kind on the day of the Eid al-Fitr.

Allah chose Jibreel (as) as the conveyor of inspiration (*wahi*) on that day, and the sorcerers even found forgiveness on the day of the Eid al-Fitr. The Holy Prophet (sal) said, ***“When the Yawmi Fitr comes around and people emerge from their homes to pray in the open space near the burial ground, Allah (swt) will take notice of them and He will say, ‘My servants, for My sake you have kept the fast, and for My sake you have performed the prayers. Now take your leave knowing that you have been granted forgiveness.’”*** Anas Ibn Malik (ra) said that the Prophet (sal) said,

On the night of the breaking of the fast, Allah will grant the recompense due to anyone who has kept the fast throughout the month. He will grant the recompense in full measure, and then in the early morning of the day of breaking the fast, Allah (swt) will give His angels their instructions. In obedience to His Command, they will promptly fly down to the earth, where they will position themselves at the street corners and crossroads, proclaiming in a voice that is audible to all created beings apart from the jinn and human kind: “O community of Muhammed! Come forth into the presence of your Lord Who accepts the smallest offering, bestows the greatest abundance, and forgives the most terrible sins.”

They were in the gardens today, if you didn't see them or hear them. They surely were at the crossroads today where we met. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, we received their blessings.

Then once the believers have emerged and presented themselves at their place of prayer, performed their prayers and offered their supplications, the Lord (blessed, eternal and exalted as He is) will make sure they are left with no need that is not satisfied, no request that He has not answered, no sin that He has not forgiven. They will then return to their homes knowing that they have been granted forgiveness. Then He will say, "O my human servants, put your request to Me know, for this I swear by My Might and My Majesty, you will not ask Me this day in this gathering of yours for anything connected with your life hereafter without my granting it to you, nor for anything connected to your life in this lower world without My attending to your need.

By My Might and My Majesty, I will surely condone the false steps you make, as long as you are consciously alert in the effort to avoid incurring My displeasure. By My Might and My Majesty, I will not put you to shame nor expose you to disgrace amongst those who are faithfully committed to observing the hudud/ states. Now you may depart, knowing you are forgiven. You have won My approval and I am well pleased with you. The angels will be happy, and they will welcome the good news of all that Allah (swt) will bestow upon the community when its members break the fast they have kept through the month of Ramadan. No soul knows what joy is reserved for them in return for their work. Eat and drink with healthy relish for what you did before in the days gone by.

So take a moment and ask Allah (swt) for your needs. But before that, express your sincerest and most heartfelt gratitude to Allah. (Silence). Now we have to turn our attention back to ourselves and our relationship with Allah (swt), to ourselves in community, devoted to the subtle presence in our lives, awakening to the presence of

Allah. We must act as individuals who are first and foremost part of a special *ummah*, part of a special community, part of a *tariqah* on *suluk*. Our success will be felt in our hearts. Our tongue will reflect the heartfelt gratitude we feel toward Allah and the Light of Allah (swt) in others. But most important is the cycle of gratitude is complete with humility. Without humility the gratitude is not fully sincere.

Let me remind you of the recent retreat *dars* where I mentioned *suluk*. It is critical that at a special time like today, we try with all of our hearts and souls, our minds, to absorb the reality of this journey, the real meaning of *suluk*. In this case, it is the journey from gratitude to ingratitude, from arrogance to humility. After a month of fasting, you have a special and unique ability to do that. Using the term *suluk*, we must understand that it comes from the word *salak*, which means to follow a road, to enter upon a course. This term also refers to the behavior of an individual who travels. It also means to behave and to comport oneself. But the root also means the eye of a needle. This is what is a *suluk*, and what our lives are. It is to place the thread through the eye of the needle.

It also reflects the community or line of those who have journeyed and who have returned to guide others. *Silsila* comes from the same root: the line of guides / travelers, who thread the *salik* through the eye of the needle of life. Many years ago, we discussed how silk is a good metaphor for one's journey. The silk worm eats only one thing, the mulberry leaf. It is a very specialized creature. But to harvest that silk, the worm has to die. It lives, until its worth to another results in its death. Then it leaves the result of its existence for generations to come in another form as a silken fabric, long after it would have lived even if it was not boiled in hot water to make the silk. It is the finest thread: strong, warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It comes from the one pointed insect who has to die in order to find its ultimate lasting role.

Allah (swt) tells us the value of life and admonished us to die before we die. That is, to live the best, most constructive life, dead to the lures of the world, united in the

awareness of His Presence, and serving His Community in service and *ibada*/ worship to Him. **“You are the best community that has been raised up from mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. And you believe in Allah. And if the people of the scripture had believed, it had been better for them. Some of them are believers, but most of them are evil-livers.”** How we manifest the quality of humility and how we understand the force that is expressed through it for the good, for change, for harmony, for inspiration; how we become sweet with *iman* for love and piety, with obedience is the inner subject of this year’s Ramadan.

The similitude of the believers in their kindness and love and affection, the Prophet (sal) said, in their mercifulness and in their sympathy and compassion towards one another, is like a body: when one organ ails, the whole body is drafted to take care of the problem.

Please, please contemplate this *hadith*. It describes what we have strived to do for almost 40 years. ***“The similitude of the believers in their kindness and love and affection, the Prophet (sal) said, in their mercifulness and in their sympathy and compassion towards one another, is like a body: when one organ ails, the whole body is drafted to take care of the problem.”*** Some among us are ill. We are all willing to be drafted. Yes, there are many who care. We have nice neighbors, nice friends, nice other members of our families. But this is ascribed to the community of believers, who will sacrifice, not because of blood, not for money, not because there is some other reward in it, but because you are a brother or a sister of the believer, and you are on the path. Please distinguish these things; they are very important.

How miraculous we begin with repentance. Usually, in the month of Ramadan, an expression of arrogance and selfishness stimulates that, and our first stage of honest seeing and achieving of humility comes with repentance. When we don’t, we repent and take accounting of ourselves. We try better the next day, by getting up and remembering

that today is sponsored by Allah (swt), by keeping those benefits that have come to us, and by sharing them for the welfare of others who are in need. Allah is always the pop up sponsor on the right hand side [of your screen]. That means to share the benefits, and not to share yourself. Your self is to be given to Allah (swt) and to be in the company of others people. You can give money, advice and time, but not your soul. Therefore, *shukr* and *nai'mah* is that. *Kufr* is the opposite. To conceal the blessings from others, to deny them, not to share the benefits, not to utilize them in a good way, is *kufr*.

Truly your Lord is full of grace to mankind, but most of them do not render any thanks or gratitude. It is He who has given you a sense of sight and understanding, but little thanks do you give. Allah (swt) loves those who are thankful. Allah (swt) assists those who are patient.

Ramadan is a time when you can thrive in your gratitude and your human potential and you can be pious and build bulwarks against disobedience, and against the better judgment of your heart and soul, sometimes. And you can thrive in your potential as a human being. Be generous, be grateful and you will find the blessing, the comfort, the safety, and the protection, the love and the respect that comes with humility. We began this month, *inshā'a-llāh*, repenting and seeking the forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, many of us asked each other for forgiveness for any errors we have made toward each other at the very beginning of the month. We strived and perhaps succeeded or even failed at times to not utter words of condemnation and criticism, or have attitudes of resentment or criticism. Hopefully, we were more tolerant, more forgiving, more aware of our state and our faith and our capacity for love, service, patience and forgiveness. Eventually, we were more and more grateful with a taste, or a hint, of humility.

Now, here we are. Who are we? Here we are, walking with the angels? Do we smell sweet to the angels? Do they seek our company or reluctantly walk beside us because they were ordered to by Allah? Did we carry through with our actions? Did we rush to

the *masjid* for the Isha prayer, even when there was no *tarawīh* and no guests present? Did we rush to *fajr*? Did we truly feel grateful at the sight of our banquet of provisions at the night of the *iftars*? Or were we refreshed from our laborious tasks of cooking and serving, speaking and advising, sharing our homes and our community? Did we, after faltering, spend a minute or an hour or a day in contemplation and hope – contemplation of our weaknesses, hope for our change? Did we forgive the other, and in trepidation forgive ourselves with a hint of shame? Did we seek to be worthy of all that has been given to us? No one is exempt from forgiveness, because no one is exempt from wrong action. So no one is exempt from repentance and sin.

We have to hold to what Allah (swt) says about His forgiveness and humility toward us, and not depend on other human beings who don't have the same *basira*, the same insight, the same sight, the same path. If we remember that the blessing of Allah (swt), the spiritual energy/*fiyd* is what carries us through these difficult times in ourselves, then Allah (swt) and His Messenger emphasize humility so much that one can have no doubt of the value of humility. There is no doubt that sincerity and humility go together, no doubt that modesty and humility go together. We read it in the Qur'an, and we read it again over and over again. It can also be heard in the *hadith* of Rasūlullāh (sal), when he (sal) said,

Allah has told me that you must be humble, that no one must boast to another. Shall I inform you of the one that hellfire will not touch? Hellfire will not touch one who is near to Allah, who is amicable with people, mild and easy to get along with. Allah (swt) exalts one who is humble, the one who sees themselves as small when they are truly great in the eyes of the people.

Another *hadith* says,

O Allah! Make me see myself as small.

He wasn't talking about height.

My brothers and sisters, the real glory, exaltation and humility lies not in our own sight, but in the sight of others. From our sight, we become humble. It begins with how we see ourselves. Often, we see ourselves quite differently than others see us; and we know that rule: if you change in six months, it takes six years for others to catch up with your change. So you cannot depend on anyone else's sight but your own, but we are very affected by the way people see us. "If I'm humble, Allah (swt) will notice me. If I'm humble, people will like me." This is not the right approach. We have to truly rid ourselves of dependency on others and keep our dependency on Allah. The only way to do this is to go back and remember Allah in all things. Go back, and remember what I and others before me have said – much greater words, much deeper words, with much greater piety – about *dhikru-Llāh* over these years. Go back, and remember and see the majesty of this creation on this beautiful-almost-Fall day. It's beautiful for us because rain may come, *inshā'a-Llāh*.

In all that we have been given, how much power we have, and how much power we don't have. We have to see how we put ourselves in submission and be very careful. In submission to strangers, strange things can happen. In submission to Allah, nothing bad will happen. Physical submission to strangers, mental and emotional submission to strangers, strange things guaranteed will happen. You will never know them. But submission to Allah (swt) and to those who love Allah (swt), you can be assured only good will happen to you and your progeny. Nothing bad will happen.

Submission means obedience; and obedience is a hard topic for all of us—obedience, to obey! From the position I stand in, believe me, I am very reluctant to ask for obedience, lest one disobeys the commands of Allah (swt) that might be coming from my mouth, and therefore loses their way to Allah. Heavy burdens, my friend; we all have them. "What will people think of me if I put this on my Facebook? What will people think of me if I twitter this? What will people think of me if I say this in private? Why am I putting this picture of myself up for everyone to see?" Anyone can see the history of your life.

There is no end to it. Learn to check ‘no.’ Accept or decline? Learn to check ‘decline.’ Interestingly, it’s analogous to what happens when you die. Your whole record is in front of you. It’s read out to you, and then Allah (swt) judges you. Now, with Facebook, you can be judged in the world as practice for being judged in the *akhirah*.

The Prophet Muhammed (sal) was a very humble man. If he saw children on the road, he would greet them and stop and play with them. If someone took his hand and wanted to lead him somewhere, he would take their hand and walk next to them, being led. He didn’t object to it. He helped his wives with their housework, and when people were working, he liked to work next to them. He mended his own shoes and sewed his own clothing; he milked the sheep and fed the animals. He gave bread to the servants, and welcomed the poor people warmly to his home, and presence. He looked after widows and orphans, and ugly people and beautiful people. He visited people who were ill, and followed the funeral procession of those who passed. He answered the call of the slaves of the community. This was the type of person he was. That’s the type of person we should all be. The world is not the thing that helps us do that, nor do strangers.

Sometimes it’s not easy. He had his moments in life, his difficulties, and he overcame them. All this was because he was aware of something. What was he aware of? He was aware that Allah (swt) is present—present in your compassion, present in your poverty, present in love, at times when you want to hate, present when people want to reject one another, and when people want to accept and forgive one another. He is present in repentance and in sin. You cannot do things from saying, “I was harmed. I was insulted. I was humiliated. I’m not being respected. This was done to me. That was done to me; they don’t listen to me.” Free your slaves! *Manumit* your slaves. You know your brother or sister could be your slave. Free your slave! The Prophet (sal) did everything to get people to free their slaves, long before the civil rights act (that didn’t free the slaves), long before the American civil war. How did he free them? He made them equals. How

did he make them equals? They dressed, they ate, they prayed beside them, like them. Get behind that; see how Allah (swt) wants us to be.

Muhammed (sal) the Prophet of Islam was aware of the Divine Presence. You can't do things consistently if you just want praise. You can't do things consistently if you just want to avoid things. You can't be consistent in your *iman* if all you want is just to be served, and not to have any dissension. There has to be a transformation in the heart and soul of the individual who has lived this life, and that is the journey of life. You want to come to the end of your life at least striving hard to overcome these resentments and difficulties, striving hard to be humble, modest, protecting your spiritual self. Being kind to everyone doesn't mean being kind to everyone. Being kind to everyone sometimes means walking away from someone, avoiding someone, avoiding situations. You have to come to the end of your life striving to do good things. Transformation comes from striving. Unless you misunderstand what I mean by "walking away," I don't necessarily mean physically walking away, but in your heart and soul you love the individual, but you know very much what you can expect.

At the same time, walking away means being willing to turn back toward. That's the harder part. To accept people's love and their changes, and that someone might not do things exactly the same way you might do them, or understand them in the same way you understand them. But look to their heart and to their sincerity. We were not born to be masters of slaves. We were born to be servants. If we come to the end of this life journey, forgetting the family that loves us and supported us, even tolerated us, if we are not leaving a legacy for the future generation, for these children here in this room, and outside the room in the tent, who will then serve the children of others across the globe? If we are not reducing our worldly delights and attachments, then what have we learned? The children will learn from us, and they will serve in their proper ways, *inshā'a-llāh*.

Do we really realize the value of our life? Do we really realize the value of this community, the uniqueness of this? Do we really realize what brotherhood and sisterhood is when it is not just through genetic blood relationship? Do we see in ourselves what others see in us? Life in the outer is an investment in others, and hence, the benefit in this world. See what we have built here, and where we have gone, and whom we have reached and continue to reach. If we want forgiveness and security, then give and give and give to the hands of the servants of Allah. If we have any *taqwa* and concern for the hereafter, then feel free to get and to get from Allah for all that giving. For if we give and give, we will be in a state of remembrance, and Allah will remember us. But if we only life for getting, we will be forgotten.

Believe me, Allah hears your *du'ā*. Study and find out how, if you wonder. Allah (swt) is present in the hearts of those who we serve, and who we love, and who we share this path with. Don't diminish the value of this path, and the difference between even the good people who are not on this path and the good people who walk it. You were chosen, so look at each other, support each other, give to each other, and pray for the sustaining of not only this *khanaqah*, this *tariqah*, but this community, because it is so unique and so blessed, the people of service here. You are unique. Take some time and think of each person – I mean that literally –one by one. Think of how they have spent their life, and what they have done, from mowing of the neighbor's lawns and taking out each other's garbage, to educating the children, serving humanity around the globe in the four corners of the world, and caring for each other's parents; from serving strangers who come to the community, to praying in the late nights for those passing in the hospitals you were serving in, and for the people who might in other circumstances hate you for who you are, while you were praying at their bedside as they were passing. "A Muslim! A different person!" But helping the addicted, teaching the seekers of knowledge and so on and so on and so on—that is in you. That comes not only from Allah (swt), because Allah (swt) is part of your beingness.

This path has given us so much. We have to give back, again and again, again and again, until we are so poor that we realize only Allah (swt) sustains us. When we realize that, we will realize that we have passed on to our next generation values and means, education and responsibility, love and concern, which sustained us, built this community, transformed our generosity and trust into work and worship, which then created gratitude and finally, *inshā'a-llāh*, humility.

Finally, everyone of us has something that we can give up, small or large, that can guarantee the future of this *khanaqah*, this community. Every one of us sitting in these rooms has an investment in the future. Every single one of us has something to be grateful for (in the human sense in *dunya*) for this community and for this path. There is nothing, nothing that is more valuable than the future of our children and the future of this work. Nothing. How do you know Allah (swt) is hearing your *du'ā*? The other part of this question is how do you know what you are thinking, hearing and knowing is from Allah? The core of that understanding comes from two major things: one is repentance. It is a repentance that is based on growing awareness that without Allah we would surely deceive ourselves.

That phrase, “without Allah” is a very tricky phrase. That’s where Shaytan comes in. Many of us think that what we are hearing is from Allah, what we are thinking is from Allah, and what we are justifying is from Allah, and what we are doing is in the Name of Allah. How do we know? How do we know if the *kathir* of the *khair* is from Allah or from Shaytan? To vouchsafe practice is to repent sincerely, to make *tawbah* sincerely. This has to be coupled with a real effort to live by what is prescribed and avoid what is prohibited. You can call it the Shar’īah if you want, and the Sunnah. That means humility that comes from awareness and gratitude / *shukr* has to be at the foundation. It’s not gratitude for what you have. What you have may be millions of dollars, beautiful homes, ability to travel the world, many friends (maybe 2-3000 on Facebook), maybe you win the lottery. But what you have inside that is guiding you is what is important.

What is important is what you have inside that puts the value on that millions of dollars, or where you travel, or who you serve in the world, and why you travel. Or see it to be really valueless unless it is used in good ways, and only in good ways, not for our own self-aggrandizement. We can't build our own paradise; did you know that? Because whatever we build will crumble. At some point, it is going to crumble. At some point, the crabgrass will take over. At some point, the car will stop. At some point, the plane will be delayed. At some point, the food will be poisoned and you will get sick. We can't build our own paradise; we can't think in that kind of detail. Only Allah (swt) could build it. So we have to have gratitude for what we have, and let it pass through us. Muslims shouldn't eat alone. You remember the story of Ibrahim and feeding people.

Gratitude will guide your intention and humility, and make what you once thought was valuable to be valueless; and what you once thought was valueless, or didn't think about much at all, was the most valuable thing you had. Gratitude will be mixed with your *nafs ammāra* until you make *tawbah*. When you have gratitude and *tawbah*, then you have piety. We all fail and struggle, and are in relative places on that scale of change. But, we have to keep trying. Don't be distracted. Don't close your world off. Don't make it so you don't listen. Don't make it so your heart is closed. Don't make it so you don't know who the friend is and who the enemy is. Don't make it so you don't know who the person is who doesn't really care. Understand what motivates the believer. We are all trying to build our *iman*. The way to do that is to have good *adab* toward Allah. Good *adab* toward Allah is seen in our good *adab* toward each other.

Part of repentance is seeking forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness is how we began Ramadan. Really, what we lack, if we don't accomplish it this month is a lack of will. If you ask yourself, did I have the willpower to drive into town every day, and come home and take care of my children? Do I have the willpower to go out and build in the heat of the day? Do I have the willpower to go to my classes in school? We find that willpower

to do that. Part of it may be mixed with our ego, with necessity for money, with preferences and desires, or the way we find our own self-esteem. People like Ibn Abbad al Rondo, or Ibn Atala Askandari, or Imam al Shadhuli, or Imam al-Ghazāli wrote in their letters over and over again that we should not strive for self-esteem. But the real self-esteem, the lasting- self-esteem, lies in overcoming these murmuring, chattering, whispering arguments and habitual patterns that we identify ourselves with.

“I am my car. I am my palace. I am my fruit trees. I am my job. I am my clothing. I am, I am, I am.” No, no, no. Before we leave this world, we have to learn to reject that. You are your piety. You are your generosity. We are our love, our openness, our loyalty. We are our obedience. We are our kindness, our simplicity. That’s who we are. Do you think I’m just talking to you or the people who may see this on YouTube—or I-Tube—or Me-Tube? No, I’m talking to me, too. I need this message. The real self-esteem lies in uplifting the self in relationship to Allah. Our real commitment comes from nothing in this world but accompaniment of Allah (swt), and being in the company of those who love Allah (swt). What about the people who just love God? Yeah, people who love God. Is it just people who go to church and speak about God? No, not necessarily. But the people who love Allah (swt) have something different. That is, they have a tradition like this: *khanqaqs* and *zāwiyas*, *shuyukh* and interpretations that have lasted centuries, a Holy Book that’s a guide not only to human history and a way to live, but tells you about the universes and the secrets of biology and chemistry and so many things. Believe me, there is a difference. Real self-esteem lies in uplifting our selves in relationship with Allah.

Our real contentment comes from nothing in this world but the accompaniment with Allah. That’s what Allah (swt) said: **“To be in the company of those who love Me, and know that I am near your side.”** Temporary happiness and joys are appealing, of course. Otherwise, Allah (swt) wouldn’t have made them. Of course, we don’t know when they will be over, or when they will come again, but what is not temporary is our

self's relationship with Allah. So we strive to have correct inner attitudes that are based not on attachment to this world but on attachment to Allah. Even our attachment to people: our husbands, wives, mothers, brothers, fathers sisters, children, aunties, uncles, whatever it is, even attachment to them has to be attachment to Allah (swt) . You cannot separate it. You cannot separate the values, or the expectations, the prescriptions or prohibitions.

So I remind you again: attachment to Allah (swt) is attachment to compassion, to mercy, to love, to patience, to understanding, to justice, to fairness, to dignity.... you finish the list. Many of you have memorized it. That's what attachment to Allah (swt) is, not some distant deity. It's not a blind following of a religion that is being taught, but a very conscious and purposeful constant affirmation of values, which gives you the criteria by which you can judge where to be, what to do, who to be around, who not to be around, what to say, what not to say, how to deal with your innermost worries and feelings, fears, doubts, joys, happinesses. Otherwise, we are convincing ourselves of something that is just not true. Otherwise, we are saying, "I live independent of Allah (swt)." Even if you think you will never say that; that's what we do. Just because the world isn't falling down on my head at this very moment, doesn't mean I'm not destroying myself from the inside out, or making myself deaf so I can't hear, or blind so I don't see, or grasping things I shouldn't have in my hands, or holding on to things I should let go of, so that when Allah (swt) comes, I have nothing to hold Allah's hands with.

We have to hold on with two hands. We don't know. That gives us reason to understand why Allah (swt) created a creation where we don't know certain things. It seems like the teachings are telling us that we are to know. Yes, we are; we *are* to seek the knowledge. But certainty of the heart and eyes comes from an understanding of what it means to be firm and steadfast, patient and persevering on this path, no matter what. The benefit of 'not knowing' is a doorway to humility and gratitude. That doorway can only stay open if we repent. We can only repent if we have the willingness and honesty to see what our

actions and our thoughts and words bring, what they affect, who they affect, and how they affect, etc.

Some people do very creative things in the midst of difficulty. Abu Bakr builds houses in the midst of chiggers and ticks, getting bitten and bitten and eaten and scratching like that, but knowing they built something beautiful. A beautiful house is built in the midst of chiggers and ticks. People run shops in terrible neighborhoods, kiosks in places where there is a lot of crime, where anybody can walk up on the street and rob them. But with a pleasant face, they disarm everyone. People try to teach people who don't want to learn, and hope that for one moment in their classes, a person hears something that changes their life.

We stay up days and nights, and nights and days, traveling for our programs. We bring young people here from around the world, who come with prejudices and bigotry and biases, and leave knowing that the person who was once their enemy is now their brother or sister. How is it done? Through the miracle of our poverty, which is not the way I would prefer it to be done, because we could do more if we weren't so impoverished. In some places, people understand the value of what they have, and how to use it. I was speaking a month or so ago up at Yogaville. They just built a new building that will hold 32 people. Because they are teaching yoga, people come for yoga; their lives benefit from yoga. Maybe they leave better people. They have a large donor base, because somebody recognizes the value of what takes a place on that property along the banks of the James River, a couple of thousand acres, I might add. I don't say that with any envy. I only say that, because look at what we do with so little.

But there should be no end to our own generosity and respect for the work that we do. Realize that we have to be responsible for ourselves. No one is going to be responsible for us, and being responsible for us is much greater than self-esteem. Self-esteem is measured by things in the world and people's responses to us, often. But real self-esteem,

when I talk about the *nafas* / life's breath, is being responsible for our real Self. It is not selfishness: doing what I want, when I want, with whom I want, how I want, for however long I want, having it the way I want, right now with no difference in exactly and no tolerance of any change. No, that is not real responsibility. Real responsibility for the self is built on humility, based on repentance and gratitude and thankfulness.

The foundation of our path, especially when we look at the Khwajagan path and the Shadhili said, is based on our attachment to Allah (swt). I give you an example again of Ibn Abad in a commentary on a very brief *hadith*. The Prophet (sal) said, ***“You have known. Be steadfast.”*** He said it five words, which means, “You know what’s right, so persevere.” This is probably one of the most profound teachings in all of Islam. You know you are responsible, you know what is right, so persevere. Don’t allow criticism of you to overwhelm you. Don’t even allow your own criticism to overwhelm you, except in awe of what you can be. Keep trying. Keep persevering. Allah judges your *niyyat* as well as your actions. Things will come to move you away from your knowledge; persevere. Be steadfast. He makes it very clear in his *tafsir* the relationship between our inner attitudes and what we do outwardly in developing certainty. Our *nafs* makes us certain of things, but it is certain of our desires, certain of the Shaytan.

It is said that when we are born, when Allah created us, He put a *shaytan* on the left side of our heart and an angel on the right side; and life is a struggle between those two. Get to the point where you can at least observe it. You can even get to the point where you refuse to host that struggle, because the struggle is over. The angel wins, *inshā’a-llāh*. [The real struggle is to] develop real certainty in this relationship, between our inner attitude and what we say and do outwardly. Conversely, what we say and do outwardly reflects our inner attitude. Which side of the heart are we operating from in this metaphor, if our words are sharp, if our words are critical, if our words or actions are harmful, if they come from the left side of the heart, even if we put titles on them? But

sometimes it's very hard. Sometimes we ourselves don't know. At least give the benefit of the doubt of a person's struggle.

If we proceed in the good actions and we abide by what the knowledge is we really have not how we interpret it for our *nafs*, not how we interpret it to get what we want or to be right, but in gratitude and humility and repentance and piety and *taqwa*, fear of Allah, fearing Allah like we fear the unknown. In other words, you are walking down a dark alley.

I'm going to tell this story again. Children, this is a difficult story, but you need to hear this story if you haven't heard it yet. And it's a true story. A girl was coming back very late at night, and she was walking. All the way she was making *du'ā* for her safety. There was a shortcut to her home through a dark alley. She was making *du'ā*, and she felt safe and secure with Allah, a pious girl, *muhajib*, sincere. Having to work late at night, [on her way home] she walks down the alley. As she comes to the end, she sees a man standing there. She becomes afraid, and increases her *du'ā*. She reaches the end of the alley, and walks by the man, and she goes home. About 20 minutes later, there is a big hubbub in the neighborhood. Some girl was attacked and unfortunately killed in that same alley just a few minutes after she passed through it. She described the man to the police; they caught him, and he confessed. They said, "Why did you not attack this girl and kill her as she walked by you? She saw you. It was because of her you were caught." He said, "I couldn't, because there were two big men on either side of her, accompanying her." That's the result of *taqwa*, *du'ā*. This is a true story; it was reported in the press.

You cannot claim that protection if, internally, your attitude is not right, if you are consciously or knowingly doing harm to others. We all, unconsciously or purposefully, sometimes say or do things; but we are responsible for what we know, and sometimes we fail miserably. We can't just go out and say, "Just make *du'ā* and there will be two men standing next to you." She was probably brought up being taught the values of *du'ā*. She

practiced it and believed it in her heart. It came naturally to her. It wasn't for protection, but for love of Allah that she was doing it. So what do we have to do? Repent, and repent in the context of the third part, which is piety, and develop the kind of trust in Allah that we are all striving for. "You know, and so remain steadfast."

If we persevere in those actions and abide by them, then we are acting with the right *adab*. In fact, we are giving *adab* the due that *adab* should have. *Adab* is alive. Compassion is alive. Mercy is alive. Justice is alive – in some places, maybe. Truth is alive. We say, "Adab, adab, adab," and the children say, "Oohhh, I'm hearing all the time, have good *adab*!" Oh, *adab* is alive. Do you like buh-buh, buh-buh, in your chest? It's saying, "adab, adab, adab." When it skips a beat, like all our hearts do at some time, we suffer. We get in an argument; we feel bad. We feel sick. We get confused. We get a physical response.

Adab deserves respect, and it's hard sometimes to have it. It's impossible, even, sometimes, we think. But we are afraid that if we have it, it will be misconstrued. What does it mean that good *adab* can be misconstrued? We persevere in our actions and abide by them, and give *adab* its rightful due. We don't seek anything other than that until Allah (swt) undertakes everything for us. That means, we return to the state where Allah is caring for us. And we return to the state where outwardly there is submission to Allah. We go from being *murīd* to *murad*. We are implementing the examples of the Qur'an and Sunnah as best as we can, to whatever degree we can, but that's always at the forefront of our minds, and we are failing miserably. No one can read your mind. They can only read your actions and past actions – not your mind. They don't know that you change and change; they don't care. Even then, we can make *du'ā* and *tawbah* and submit to the proper *adab*. We don't try to manipulate it; and we disclaim all pretensions to piety and spiritual states.

Ibn Abad said, “*And we show contentment with Allah, whether in lack or in sufficiency.*” It takes a lot of energy to want. It even takes a lot of energy to buy something on Paypal or Craig’s List. I wanted to buy something on Craig’s List for about \$200, but he said that I had to go pick it up in Petersburg. I wrote back and said, “Can I send you a cashier’s check? (It’s money!) And I’ll give another \$10 for shipping the thing.” No, I had to go pick it up. I have to drive to Petersburg to pick it up, because this man is too stupid to know what a cashier’s check is? *Allahu akbar!* It takes a lot of energy to want. It takes a lot of energy to push things away and to say no. I’m an impulsive shopper. I walk up and down the aisles in Kroger. I think about what I’m going to need two years from now. I come home and Mitra looks at me... The kids say, “Come on, Dad. Don’t stop there. Don’t look in that window. We don’t need that.” And I think, “Well, there’s only this much left in that bottle, and this we could use.” Thanks to my father who used to do all the shopping, at Kroger, by the way.

It takes a lot of energy to push away, even to push away from the table, some of us. It takes a lot of energy to excuse. It takes a lot of energy to rationalize and justify. And it takes a lot of energy to criticize, to deceive. It also takes a lot of energy to practice, to hope, to be positive. But one pays off in big, big returns, and the other one breaks your bank. Sometimes it takes a lot of energy to do the right thing for yourself, not the selfish thing. Ibn Abad said to Yahya:

Trust in Allah and you shall obtain every good and spiritual perfection, as well as rid yourself of your own claims to capacity and potentiality. This conforms to sincerity, and denies the nafs of any value or station. Abide between fear and hope. Testify to the benevolence within the manifestation of the severity that Allah has given to you. And if you accomplish this, you no longer hear by your own ears, nor by your own eyes, grasp by your own hands, walk by your own feet, or even comprehend with your own heart. You will either be confined to an asylum, or

you will be seated on raised couches among the people who are friends of Allah, and who have intimate knowledge of Allah.

This year, we have seen each other's growth and development. This year, we have shared the challenges of illness and hope. In the coming year, as we begin our journey once again toward Ramadan, *inshā'a-Llāh*, let the growth be exponential and let it be accompanied by health and sustained *iman*. I make *du'ā* that we all embrace obedient submission, gratitude, and trust. Verily, Allah changes not what a people have until they change it for themselves. May Allah bless you and keep you, and fill you with the choicest blessings of this Ramadan. *Asalaamu aleykum*. Ask Allah for what you need.

Second Khutbah. *Du'ā*. For those of you who made *itikāf*, I pray that Allah (swt) accepted your special efforts. For those of you who fasted the month of Ramadan without any problems and with ease, I pray that Allah gives you some strain next year, not too much, so it means more to you. For those of you who suffered some small sufferings or difficulties or major life challenges, in the weight of illnesses or the loss of loved ones in Ramadan, I beg of you to consider what a blessing it was to help you become more conscious and to awaken you to yourself and to Allah's Presence. You were asleep and you did not know it, or perhaps complacent, rigid, and unyielding, or without trust and faith; hence, you were tested. For those of you who for health reasons were unable to fast, I pray that our fast was accepted by Allah (swt), because we prayed for you. We made *du'ā* for your health and well being. And if He accepted our prayers, and those made for you, you must have been accepted. It is within Allah's power that the healing life force can once again cleanse and heal your bodies so that your health becomes well enough that you, too, might fast once again.

I pray that the blessings of the Eid accrue to everyone in this community and to our work. I pray that we all awaken once again, and sustain that awakening to our duty and our responsibility to this community, to the *khanaqah* and to one another. I pray that all of

our brothers and sisters receive the blessings of Allah (swt), and that we come to a better understanding among ourselves, in the spirit of our *tariqah* and our community and our capacity as sincere seekers, to reach out and help each other collectively, not just independently. May Allah bless all of our brothers and sisters in this world with peace and happiness. I pray for our government and for the leaders of our government. For the leader of our government, may he find peace in his heart and health in his mind, and may he be strong through the tribulations. May Allah and he have clear and direct communication, so that his special and unique capabilities can be seen, and we can see the end of racism in this country.

May we all pray for the goodness of this country. I pray for our brothers and sisters who are the victims of bad policies in our country and others, and other people of those nations who would oppress them. I pray that we come to an understanding of the unity of humanity, that we can serve and help one another. I pray that those people who bring death, destruction and misery upon others realize and fear the result of those actions. The only resource that is worth conspiring and fighting over and worrying over is the resource of our love for one another, our love for Allah (swt). I pray that all the weapons of destruction, all the biological, chemical, radiological weapons, minefields, weaponry that can be directed from one person to another be abolished and made not to work, to completely fail. May the only weapon that can be used is the weapon of love to awaken the hearts of others. I ask you to join me in the *du'ā*. I pray that all of those who do wrong actions in the name of Islam become not only awake to their error, but totally fearful, and ask forgiveness of Allah. Let no one, leaders or followers, use Islam or Tasawwuf for the wrong ends. I pray that those people in the name of Christianity, who we know are gathering in their hate and resentment to others find the beauty of Jesus, Isa (as). My dear friends, brothers and sisters, family, members of this community, sharers in our destiny, lovers of Allah, I wish you *Eid Mubarak. Asalaamu aleykum.*