



[Individual Bricks Make a Strong Building:](#)  
Each Seeker's Preparation Begins in the Heart

Allah (swt) has revealed in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Safaa:

**Is it the false deities you desire besides Allah? What is it you think of the Lord of the worlds? And he cast a glance at the stars and said, "Surely I am ill," at which they turned their backs and went away from him. Then they turned to their deities and he said, "Why don't you eat? What is the matter with you that you don't speak?" Then he attacked them, striking with his right hand, and his people came running toward him. And he said, "Why do you worship what you, yourselves, have carved, when Allah has created you and what you make?"**

Allah (swt) also says:

**Surely, Allah enjoys justice, kindness, and generosity to those near to you, and He forbids all that is shameful and wrong and lewd acts. He admonishes you that you should remember the truth. Fulfill your covenant with Allah when you have taken them. Do not break your oaths if you have confirmed them, then you have made Allah the guarantor of them over you. Surely Allah knows what you do.**

*Asalaamu aleykum.* It seems like just yesterday it was *jumah*. The weeks fly by, and sometimes the days are very long. Such are the miracles of time and space. Our hearts should always be able to tell us the essence of truth. I don't want to say that the heart deceives us, but the truth put through our minds can deceive us and cause conflict. The

heart knows what is true. Here is an example where Allah tells us that when we look at the hearts of human beings, but at the same time use reason, there are things we can come to understand. Those idol gods couldn't eat, but people worshiped those unreal idols. Here is your heart, and here is your reason. Individuals who are committed to Islam are like building bricks that are mortared or fused together to form a solid wall. Each individual, like a brick, has to be strong and capable of withstanding the weight and the stress it is called upon to bear by the nature of the structure; yet, it distributes the weight and responsibility among the other bricks.

Each brick has to be fully prepared to withstand what is constructed. It has to be constructed, itself, [and has] to be put into the fire in its own sense, purified in a kiln and pass some kind of minimum standard. So too, an individual has to go through a process of training and development in order to be effective within the construction and building of al-Islam. If you go to a place where they make bricks, you always see a pile of broken ones, ones that don't meet the muster. You wonder how many bricks met it, compared to the big pile of bricks lying there. Well, you can say that, too. Even if you go to a mosque, you can find a pile of bricks that didn't make the muster.

What's involved in this construction of an individual which we had talked about in so many ways over the years, especially in terms of building character, is an endless topic. What has the individual to do in order to prepare oneself for their role as a Muslim and as a person of *tariqah*? These are very basic questions that have to be answered at some point for the true Muslim society, the society of believers, whose hearts are filled with the presence of Allah (swt); for the society of those who are humble, generous, and filled with gratitude, and kind toward one another; for those who are filled with peace with themselves and secure in Allah; and for those who seek that their individual self is received by Allah (swt), indeed, revived by that Divine Presence. These are really serious issues.

The beginning of the process begins in *qalb*, the heart. If you look at yourself and inside of yourself, you will find (which is in each of us) a whole universe comprised of emotions, thoughts and desires, urges and instincts, intuitions and creativity, knowledge and ignorance, a universe that motivates and drives us toward or away from things from within. This *qalb* doesn't mean just this physical organ that pumps blood through our bodies. It means the center, the axial point of our beingness, our personality, our motivations, desires and urges, our ideas, our sense of what is right and our sense of what is wrong. What we want to do is not so much be satisfied in our minds, but be satisfied also in our hearts. Allah explains in the Qur'an that this is the key to the human being.

The human being's success depends not on what he or she wants physically, or his or her personality, but what the person does, what the intention behind it is, and what lies at the core of that individual's personality that can be adjusted, constructed, and re-constructed in order for the good intentions to take form. Also in Qur'an Allah sends this message: **“Except the one who comes to Allah with a sound heart, none will be successful in His eyes.”** What is a sound heart? The Prophet (sal) said, ***“Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the human body and if it is right, then the whole body is right. If it is corrupted, then the whole body is corrupted.”*** This is the true heart. According to the Qur'an, it is the basis for happiness and for misery; the basis for rightness or for corruptness.

Social institutions, other kinds of institutions, can add to the benefit of human society. We are one of those institutions. But they can also corrupt society just as we see this week in the news how many people are corrupted by their partisanship, and by the institution of governance itself. It is not just in these foreign lands where there are corrupt people, but in our own country. These institutions create misery, and indeed fear and terror in the hearts of people, and destroy society. They can exploit, as they do, and abuse others through economic and political means; but the basis of all the diseases, as

well as the cure, lie in the heart, in that organ that keeps us alive. We have to come to know our hearts and not be moved, dissuaded or confused.

At the depths of the heart is a rightness or righteousness we are looking for. What is it that stops the human being from seeking what is right, and doing what is right, and turns us toward blindness? Allah says, **“It is not the eyes that go blind, but it is the heart inside which goes blind.”** This is the basic starting point of view. It is the basis for *qalb*. It is the basis for *muraqabah*, turning toward the heart as we do in our meditation. It is the basis for *at-tazkiya*, purification. It is the basis for social institutions, *zakat*. It is the basis of *dawa*, summoning people to the service of humanity by serving Allah. It is the basis of *khidma* in that service, whether it is service to the country or in a social /political way, or in educational institutions, or service to the creating of good products, or service to other human beings through their welfare and health, through our personal sacrifice, or through our professions as doctors, lawyers, farmers, mothers, and fathers. This is the basis that begins in the heart.

There are those of us who live as if we are, and who say we are, personally committed to Islam. But it is not to Islam as a monolithic structure, but rather to Islam as a dynamic moving force, as a movement, if you will, of people involved in a greater path, a greater struggle (*jihad al-akbar*) within one’s own self. That struggle is manifest in the way we serve other human beings, and in the way we care for our own selves, so that we can continue to serve other human beings, and serve Allah thereby. Our attention should always be riveted by keeping our hearts in the center of our beings, the center of our personality, keeping it pure and unadulterated. Our whole attention has to be focused on this continuous struggle to purify and polish the heart. There are endless ways in which it can be tarnished.

All the rites prescribed by the Qur’an reach out to us to purify the deepest regions of our being. The Qur’an states: **“It is not the flesh and blood that reaches Allah. It is the**

**piety, the *taqwa* within your hearts, which finds acceptance.”** If each one of us is a primary brick in the society of that *ummah*, if each one of us is important in the structure of society and life, then the heart is the foundation upon which all this structure is built. The most important question is how should we go about preparing the basic building blocks of society and the future? Maybe we call it the slab upon which the bricks are laid, the foundation. We have to do that by understanding first of all that the heart has to submit totally and exclusively to Allah (swt). We really can't have two agendas that last a lifetime, pulled in two different directions. We have to trust in Allah, submit to Allah, and do our best. We can't compartmentalize; we can't fragment; we can't dedicate one piece of our heart to Allah and another part to some other god or god-like thing like wealth or status or career.

There is a very beautiful verse in Qur'an which enlightens us to this idea. It tells about some of the *mushrikīn* who sacrificed animals, and they said that one part of the animal was for Allah and another part was for the sake of the other idols. Because Allah doesn't accept things that are divided, the verse asks us to remember that whatever is assigned to Allah is also a reality assigned to the idols, because Allah does not accept something that is divided. He wants us to be undivided in service to Him. In other words, there are no idols; there is only Allah (swt). As long as we remain divided within ourselves; so long as our eyes are looking here and there, wanting this and wanting that, the grass being always greener on the other side; so long as our destination is over there, or over here or back there, and never where we are, we will never be able to achieve even the first condition for building a strong and pure character and personality.

It's like the construction people who get near the end of a job, and are busy getting the next one ready. They may make some mistakes in finishing the first job because they have already been paid for that. Now you have to go start the new building. Why do we allow ourselves to have divided loyalties and focuses? Why do we allow our hearts to be captured in so many different ways? It's because we are not allowing our hearts to be

captured by the one thing that is the thread between all hearts, and that is the love of Allah (swt), the love of His Prophet Muhammed (sal). Nothing in this world will be useful to us, when we lie down on our deathbeds, however hard we have strived, whatever we have gotten, if we have this split focus. We have to recognize that the real goal, the real reward, the real prize to be won is not in the worldly possessions, received from worldly human beings like ourselves, but only from our Creator, Allah (swt). That is where the most prized of anything comes. Even if we go out and get a lot of Reward Zone points at Best Buy, better remember where the money is coming from to pay for that. We had better be prepared to understand Who gave, and Who can take away.

We can put real value even on material things if we put real striving behind it. The material things in this life have value: our families, our homes, our food on the table, even the things we buy for our own relaxation can have real, real meaning if we understand where they come from, and if we give praise to the One Who gave it to us, and we understand that we are just caretakers of it all. Everything in life is a lease arrangement, even if you think you have ownership. The first step toward Allah (swt) that will deliver us from the struggle, pain, and torment and the punishment that comes from ignorance is committing ourselves wholly and undividedly to Allah (swt). If we would be willing to sell ourselves for the sake of Allah, if we would be willing to make a product for the sake of Allah, if we were willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of Allah, then we truly come to the first step of building the type of individual that has been described so far in this *khutbah*.

When I say “for the sake of Allah (swt),” when I say, “we make Allah (swt) wholly and undividedly the focus of our commitment,” it means that Divine Presence in our family, in our work, in our society. All the things that we do, we have to take it to the core, to the basis. The second step we can talk about some other time. It is to love Allah (swt).

What does it mean to love Allah (swt)? Who loves Allah (swt)? Who is Allah (swt)?

We talked about it recently, and we’ll talk about it some more. I’ll be talking about it in

Charlottesville, *inshā'a-llāh*. Ask yourself, not only who is Allah (swt) but who are you and who am I to even have the relationship? We can understand the answer to that question much more easily when we understand what we are willing to give, and what we are willing to offer to Allah (swt). I remember many years ago when I was practicing yoga, before I became a Muslim, I was doing the pujas. I would go out in the morning and collect the flowers and fruits and get everything prepared for those pujas. It wasn't putting them at the feet of the idols that was important; it was the process of collecting them that was the real important thing. It was always the preparation. It wasn't the invoking of some idol to answer your prayers and to fulfill some mystical epiphany. You realize it was always preparing, making things look beautiful, getting the fruits, knowing what was coming at 3:00 in the morning.

Well, 3:00 in the morning is a good time for *tahajjud*. It is a good time for preparing for the day. It is a good time to wake up, even for 5 or 10 minutes, talk to Allah, and prepare. Because the altar you are preparing is in your heart and the idol is not an idol. It is your life itself in your heart/*qalb*. So move to the higher level. Try it. Take a few moments. I'm blessed to usually be up around 4:00 in the morning for a few minutes before I drop off the cliff of sleep again. It's a really wonderful time to take even 5 minutes to think of Allah (swt), and give praise to Allah (swt), and be grateful for what Allah (swt) has provided to us, even the challenges, the difficulties, and the pains. It is a simple message, but *inshā'a-llāh*, one that is meaningful.