

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Sadaqa: Generosity](#)

with the Example of the Prophet (sal)

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as women used to display themselves in the Time of Ignorance. Establish *salat* and pay the *zakat* and obey Allah and His Messenger. Because Allah wishes only to remove impurity from you, O people of the House, and purify you with a thorough purification. (33:33)

Allah also says in the Holy Qur'an:

Whoever of you is submissive to Allah and His Messenger and does what is right, We shall give a reward twice over.

And bear in mind that which is recited to you in your houses of the revelations of Allah and wisdom. Lo! Allah is both subtle and aware. (33:34)

You warn only him who follows the reminder and fears the beneficence of the secret. To him bear tidings of forgiveness and rich rewards.

These are different references to the topic of *sadaqa*. There is a high level of importance placed on generosity in Islam and natural kindness, and to reflect on the innumerable good qualities and excellent characteristics of the Prophet Muhammed (sal). His generosity is limitless. He is an ocean of kindness, and the

example of his generosity is compared at times to the expanding universe in which we live, in which stars are constantly being created, atoms colliding with each other creating more atoms. It was as if the Prophet Mohammed, when the opportunity came to be generous, not only rose to the need for the generosity, but he became even more generous.

As we are in this month of Ramadan, we should look at generosity as an opportunity, especially at this time when so many people in the world are in need. Not only ourselves, but in our own community which is always being tested on a material level and a spiritual level. All over the world, these tests are going on, and if we can really promote a sense of kindness and reciprocity and generosity during these days in the month of Ramadan, Allah will not only reward others with our prayers but will reward others also. This is a very big subject, and I'm taking very little time talking about it. We are not talking about giving only when you have things in your possession and you give from your surplus. In fact, it means to give when you, yourself, have hardly anything. That's why it's different than *zakat*.

You might not give *zakat* if you don't qualify for it. But *sadaqa*, everyone qualifies for and needs to give. According to the concept, we should divide generosity into three specific groups. One is to give what one has in possession of, and the one to whom it is given also has something in their possession. The second is to give while one has something in their possession, and the one who is given is in need. The third is the one giving is in need, but places his own needs aside, and gives priority to others. If I give something to Shems, he already has things in his possession. He is not maybe needing that, but I am giving it out of love. And with that love comes a blessing. But if we give to someone who is a poor person who has nothing, that is quite different. If we give to someone who is in need, even if they have something in their possession but they are in need, what you are giving them is important.

It's very important that we discriminate and use *furqān*. When you see someone and meet them and see their circumstance, you think of it in terms of what is their need. I think we have experienced all these things in our own *khanaqah* here – the need and the generosity. Many of us I think are of the last group, giving. There have been times when people who have very little here who give to others. It's not just money: it's time, energy, focus, many things. There was a story narrated at the time of the Prophet (sal):

A woman made the intention of giving him a present. She didn't have much wealth to buy him something, so she intended to weave something. She had very little thread, so she wove a kalpina, a little undergarment. The Prophet (sal) accepted it, and was very much in need of the cloth. He wore it around the lower part of his body. The men who saw it liked it, and they thought it was very nice. One of them mentioned it to the Prophet (sal), who then walked into another room, changed into another garment that he borrowed from someone else, and gave it to the man. The Companion saw this and felt guilty about that. But it had already been given, and he wouldn't take it back.

So a sensible person can understand from this story that the Prophet's (sal) generosity is on such a level that it is absolutely impossible to imagine a case where he himself was in need, and borrowed from someone else. Quite the contrary, he gave away to others whatever he had. He was the example of a person who had nothing, and if anything came into his possession and saw someone else's need, he would give it to them. Another similar incident that describes the superior grade of his kindness and generosity, even to the highest rank, was narrated by Ibn Anas.

He said he served the Prophet (sal) for 10 years at home, and while on his journeys. He narrated once the Prophet (sal) was returning from one of his battles to Medina when some of the villagers surrounded him closely. They began to pull harshly on his collar, so hard it left marks on his skin. They said, "O Prophet! Order for us some of the wealth that has been given to you!" The Prophet (sal) did not become angry or serious. He did not become grave. He smiled at them very kindly, and in a light, joking way, told some of the Companions to give them some of the wealth they asked for.

Whatever he had, he gave on demand; and though he was hurt and pushed and almost strangled, he didn't show signs of being upset. He smiled and ordered what they asked for. I think we listen to these stories and think they are really nice stories, and that we should tell them to our kids, but it tells us about a perfected being. The nature of perfection is to be good, and generous, and kind, also giving and trusting. If you just tell the story to someone else, you forget that it applies to you.

Certainly, when we look at the trials and tribulations of our own life, especially in recent years when people have gotten sick and ill and have passed, and dealing with the physical and financial needs of people, we could feel put upon by every paranoid and extreme and insecure idea. If we think about the kinds of pressures that were on the early believers in the beginning of Islam, as they were at the time of the early Christians and Jews also, at the time of the Pharaoh, we have to admit that we have not been sorely tested and tried ourselves.

We can see from the last story how people had respect and love for him, but their own selfish ends were very strong. They still wanted him to share his wealth, which they thought he had. Of course, he didn't have much wealth at all. This tells us that

people misunderstand what you have. They suffer from that delusion. We have worked very hard to build this community and these houses. It's not that we have a lot of money, but Allah Swt has blessed us, and wanted us to be this way. We lived in very impoverished ways for many years, under much strain. But we try to share what we have, and hope to be known for our hospitality and our love of people.

The virtue of generosity was of such value and importance that Islam not only recommends it, but enjoins us to quality to reflect that characteristic. Certainly, as we have said, the generous person will share their life, their property, their pleasure, and their prosperity with others, not only thinking about themselves, but thinking about other people. A generous person really benefits themselves by fulfilling their humanitarian duty; and secondly helps others, helps them to solve their problems and fulfill their needs. A generous person makes people happy by their good behavior and their kindness, and tends to prevent them from doing wrong things, which always happens in society, mostly due to poverty, to insecurity, fear, and disparity between classes and citizens. We have to understand who we are dealing with; but at the same time, we have to come at it from the point of view of generosity.

We were just with Charles, who was talking to the children, and he said, "You ought to be around good people. Some people walk into the room and the room turns cold. They are like psychic vampires." This is very important. You have to be able to judge the character of the human being also. Giving is one thing; taking is another, as you have heard me say a hundred times. To be forgiving is to give. To be for getting, to forget Allah, is to ask for something for yourself.

A person who is generous can only lead us to the right path. That path has to pass through the realm of service to society, like the work Rashid is doing here this

summer with us, helping these young people understand their role in society, and what is all around them, crying out for need. A kind person, a generous person gives of their time and effort. Some people spend their lives in service of society, like most of us do, and create valuable foundations that remain after their death. They may be hospitals, or libraries, or organizations like our organization. It is a great characteristic that human beings have.

The Qur'an doesn't mention the word generosity from *sahih*, which means generous, while in several verses there are other words that are used, like *karim* and others. Many verses in Qur'an contain the word *infaq*, which is the same meaning, and seen as a sign of greatness in human beings. The Qur'an praises generous people, and encourages generosity in people who are not generous. People who have avarice are reproached. Avarice is a sign of *munafiq* or hypocrisy. A *munafiq* is a person who has avarice, as well as arrogance. We can quote many 'āyāt from Qur'an.

...those who perform *salat* and spend of what We had bestowed secretly and openly, for such there is a good end. (35:29)

Such as who believe and spend in Allah's way, there will be great reward.

However, there are many points we have to understand about this. One is that spending actual physical money, or something that represents money in the way of Allah is highly recommended. Allah Swt prefers that everyone be part of society where equity is the goal, and where people who are in need, have their needs fulfilled. In return, Allah Swt promises that He will return the money that has been given away by us, and we are clear that money is His, as I spoke last night. And giving it away is for Him. Last night's discourse was a very good turning point. I'm

sorry it sounds like I'm promoting myself. But it was a very important discourse last night. I will tell that hidden in there – not so hidden because I drew your attention to it two or three times – is a real turning point in your own mentality, if you would embrace it.

In that way, every human being has an opportunity to be a philanthropist, not just people who have their own money. We consider it all being Allah's money anyway. He also says:

Allah will bestow a great reward on those who are generous. And those people who use their property in the way of Allah and continually help the poor day and night are promised by Allah that He will reward them from Heaven with their generosity.

So we should take a very realistic view of ourselves, here, during Ramadan, here in this world, here in the US, and where we work all over the world. There are so many people who are fearful, who are storing up for the future, concerned about their futures. I'm concerned; aren't you? I don't exclude myself. When I think about the world our children are growing up in, and what they have to do to accomplish anything, whether it's to go to college, or get good grades, and study something that's beneficial for other human beings – not just what they like. But hopefully what they like comes from where they grew up; and what they like is to be able to communicate good things and serve humanity in good ways, *inshā'a-llāh*. I feel very grateful that we are so far at least safe and secure here.

A young man I met yesterday said, "I have all these things going on in my life. My sister is in drug rehab, she's 17." His father is Indian; his mother is American and a yogini, a disciple of Muktananda. He says, "I've had a hard time, and I'm very

worried about my sister.” He wanted to talk about what is Sufism. Nice young man. He said, “I feel safe here. I can talk.” I tell the young people all the time, “You are safe here,” *inshā’a-llāh*. At the same time, I think we don’t put enough effort into our generosity. You have to have good intention in life. Intention is very important, as you know.

I mentioned earlier that one can have a good intention for what you want, but you also have to have a good intention for what you need. It may be that you need to either get a good grade or a good job, or you need to be able to provide for your family; it may not be exactly what you want in the moment. You may need to provide for your parent, like you brought your mother down to Blacksburg to be nearer to you, or Jehan is going to bring her mother nearer to her again. This is the important thing: an intention for what you need, not necessarily what you want in the moment – that is not to imply that you did not want to bring your mother here.

We have not fully digested the *sadaqa*. We have not made it part of ourselves enough. It is not just from a cultural point of view when something happens, like a wedding, or the passing on of someone, or a special occasion when we go find a poor person and give them something, or during Ramadan if you are not fasting. But we should really institutionalize in our own lives and in our institution, itself, a better understanding and activity of *sadaqa*. If we don’t do that, we can’t really believe that Allah Swt is going to send anyone a reward.

What is a reward? It is the re-awarding of something we already had. Re-awarding: we have given away something, and Allah is going to replace it. A reward is not a gold star for doing something good. You do something good, because Allah will recognize you are doing it for the good. It means you are giving some goodness from yourself to someone else, and Allah is going to send it back to you, re-award

that goodness, plus more to you. We really have not developed a deep and profound trust, unless each one of us commits ourselves, especially institutionally, to contribute even a small amount on a weekly or monthly basis to our own needs in the *khanaqah*, and to people's individual needs at times, as some of you are doing for Khadija, for example right now.

I don't mean we have to send money off to Afghanistan or go to Roanoke to do service in a kitchen. It's the attitude here, too. And it's not just to Muslims, either, but to all of Allah's creatures. After all, it's *sadaqa* to put feed in the bird feeder for the squirrel. We would have much more faith and sustain our ability in our community, which is under great financial stress often, like now. We still have some of the same problems here which we had years ago. We will not have full confidence in our future until we understand generosity, like Farah. I called her on the phone and said, "Farah, I need you in the school. Leave your job." I have never in my life asked anyone to do that. Except for Daoud; I said "change your job," to him and he did. She went in, talked to the HR person, took early retirement, and here she is. *Alhamduli-Llāh*, may Allah reward her and us for that.

Ramadan is a time when we reflect on these blessings. We come to the time of repentance in Ramadan. We ask of each other what we need; and hearts meet. I called up Rachid on the phone and said, "I need you in Bedford. Would you consider coming here to the Global Youth Village?" He has a job, a family. In two seconds he said, "I'll make the arrangements. I'll come." What a reward to have him here. This is why. We say, "You're my friend; you're my brother." How many people say that and never talk to them ever again? This is real brotherhood; the essence of Islam, and the core of Sufism. In Ramadan, we really need to have cleared the slate to enter into it, and look what we are writing so far for the future. *Alhamduli-Llāh*.

The Prophet said that he came to uplift the character and affirm the moral character of people in this world. That was his primary mission, and the Qur'an was his example. We have to understand the examples of generosity that we see in this prophet. They are not just historical examples of some man who was a very important person, who we are supposed to love and respect and tell stories about. We have to go deeper into these stories and understand what it means, and have confidence in our lives. By the way, I only gave three examples. There are thirty examples in this room. I call up Abdun Nasr on the phone and say, I have to go to Washington, and he changes his life around. His wife has to pick up the balance in her job. I call Allaudin on the phone at dinner time and he drops everything and comes running. I ask Mustafa to help in something and he drops everything and comes. Everybody has a story here. This is the core of *sadaqa*. It's probably the only reason why we have survived, quite honestly. And how much protection we have had! The Prophet (sal) said,

I was trained by Allah, and Ali was trained by me. Allah has ordered to me from being greedy and oppressive, and there is nothing that causes Allah's anger more than stinginess and immorality.

It is narrated that in his final illness, the Prophet (sal) wished to make a request of his uncle Abbas, and asked his uncle to accept his request of fulfilling his covenant and repaying his debt. Abbas replied that he could not, because he was very old and had a large family to look after. The generosity of the Prophet had been so extensive that he (sal) had been unable to fulfill his own covenant.

Jibreel narrated that the Prophet (sal) never disappointed anyone who asked for help.

Mahsoodi narrated that a needy man came to Ibn Abbas and asked for a donation of something Allah had bestowed upon him. He said that he had heard that he had given a beggar one thousand dirham, and then apologized because he thought it wasn't enough! He said, "What a difference between me and that person." The man asked whether he had a good name or wealth, and Abbas replied he had both. The man said, "A good reputation means being generous and benevolent." After this conversation, Abbas gave him two thousand dirham and apologized that it wasn't enough. The needy man said, "If the giver is not ubadaiya, he is better than him. If he is ubadaiya, he is better than he used to be." Ubadaiya then gave him another thousand dirham. The man said, "The benefactor must be the most generous of people, and from the tribe of the Prophet (sal)." After that, the man swore by Allah that his benefactor was him. The man swore by Allah that he had not been mistaken, only doubt was the cause, and that his luminous face showed a kindness and generosity that was only seen on the face of the Prophet (sal). He knew that the generosity of the Prophet and that family was the source of the blessings.

Don't we want our families to be known as generous, serviceful, kind, and hospitable? Don't we want that ethic and morality and intelligence? We want our children to do the best they can do, understanding that the stresses in this world are there only to give you strength, and that Allah will always help you and always see you through, and the Prophet (sal), and the *shuyukh* of this line. You have the *madad* of all of these people, and you have their *maiyyat*/accompaniment. Imam Sadiq narrated:

The Prophet Mohammed went to the tribe of Janaria and generously gave them everything he had. They crowded so close around him that he had to take refuge against a tree, hurting his back. They took from him even his striped cloak made of Yemeni cloth. The Prophet (sal) asked them to return his cloak, and swore by Allah that the tree he took refuge under would be generous. The Prophet left and after that, the tree flowered and fruited, and the people had what they needed.

People come here and say it is like a Paradise, because they come in and see light here – not just trees, and not just the lights outside. By the way, the lights look beautiful at *fajr*. They are more beautiful at *fajr* than at *maghrib*. The two of us who were here this morning really enjoyed them. People are very taken with the generosity and willingness of all of you to serve them, and to take care of them, to pick them up and bring them to the *masjid*, and make sure they have bread and milk and whatever they need. We know there is some kvetching and complaining and sometimes whining, even through all that, people see the light in your faces and the kindness. They feel your generosity. Even if I say something like, “I’m sorry, that person should have done this,” the people say, “They were probably busy!” They become Muslims overnight. Charles is making excuses for someone else. This is *sadaqa*, my friends.

I hope that those of you who need jobs will find jobs, and those who are ill will find health, and that the problems in our work and business will be solved. The reward is for the time spent and effort spent and distance traveled. We need to expect from Allah the re-awarding of that so that we can help so many more people. What can we do in this world? I think we can educate humanity as to their own capacity and power, educate ourselves the best way we can, and our children in a good way. We can come to understand that with that kind of education and knowledge, that kind of

environment, comes safety and security. The word for safety and security is *taslim*, and the word for *taslim* is Islam. So, *Asalaam aleikum*.