



[Warnings to Maintain Balance and Avoid Excessiveness](#)

Allah Swt revealed in the Holy Qur'an:

Why do you cloak the truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth, and do it knowingly? A group of the People of the Book say to one another, "Believe in what has been sent down to those who believed" at the beginning of the day, and reject it at the end of the day so that they may go back on their faith. And do not believe anyone but that one who follows your own religion. Say, truly the only trustworthy guidance is the guidance of Allah. And do not believe that anyone can receive the like of what you have received or argue with you before your Lord. Say, truly, bounty is in the hands of Allah. He grants it to whom He wills, and Allah is Boundless and Knowing. And He singles out for His Mercy whom He wills, and Allah is Infinitely Bounteous.

My dear brothers and sisters, *inshā'a-llāh*, today we will talk about some form of *mizan*, balance and harmony. The Prophet (sal) reportedly said, ***"Beware of excessiveness in religion before you have perished as a result of such excessiveness in religion."*** And Allah Swt states in the Qur'an: **"He intends every facility for you. He does not want to put you into difficulties."** The Prophet (sal) also said, ***"Religion is very easy, and whoever overburdens himself will not be able to continue in that way. Be right without excessiveness or negligence; near perfection in having good timing and being rewarded for your regular deeds."***

Throughout the Qur'an we find warnings and admonitions not to be excessive, and to be balanced. But we live in a world today where, when we look at Islam, all we

see is excessiveness and unbalance, unfortunately. Allah says, **“O people of the Book! Commit no excessiveness in your religion, nor save Allah anything but the truth.”**

He warns Muslims, **“O you who believe. Make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you. And commit no excesses, because Allah loves not those who are given to excess.”**

If we are honest and look around in the world today, what do we find? We don't have to look beyond our own community. We don't have to comment on anyone else's community of supposed believers. How can you be a believer if you don't follow what the Qur'an says, even though you are taking it and thumping it in public, putting it on tv, throwing it up on YouTube, and beating people over the head with it? And at the same time you are disgracing it with excesses. That's the state of the world of Islam today.

We find American Muslims who have been spared a great deal of the cultural tradition-bound sectarian divisions of Islam, which in some places in the world have led to very excessive actions, violent oppression, warfare among different Muslims, and proponents of slaughter in the name of Islam. All we have to do is look to our brothers and sisters in Egypt, Libya, and Afghanistan, Tunisia, Syria, and other places where violence and a lack of understanding of the basic Islamic principles of tolerance and *ijma* and *ijtihad*, and *ra'y* and *shura'*, and the basic, basic principles of compassion, mercy, tolerance, patience, love, and understanding have been foreclosed by what we call today political Islam.

Sufic understandings that come from *ta'wil* (that we have been speaking about recently) and *dhikr* in daily life need to rule our lives. We cannot remember something we didn't know. When I say, “Remember when we went on vacation last

year?” How can you remember it if you didn’t go on that vacation? When Allah Awt says hundreds of times in the Qur’an to remember, we must be trying to remember something we knew, somewhere inside of ourselves. What is *dhikr* but attributing to Allah what is Allah’s. The beautiful nature today, the beautiful sun in the sky, the wonderful faces of the people gathered here. The goodness in the hearts, the sweetness of the children – this is seeing Allah, and that is *dhikru-Llāh*.

In this country, we have been spared the extremes, though there are many in this country who have seen them at play. People who have emigrated carry with them the memories, and often the feelings of those cultural, tradition-bound sectarian attitudes. They tend to forget the freedom that lies in the faith and the trust of a truly benevolent, higher authority: Allah Swt, Who is present, and Who tells us He is as near to us as our jugular vein, and Who lives in the values and hearts of the believers. ***“You will find Me in the heart of the believer.”*** What we find in Islam today is not what we talked about before, the hijacked Islam I spoke about for so many years. No, today we find a new religion. The clever people named it the same as the old religion. They called it Islam. If you are going to start a new religion, you usually give it another name. But no, they think it’s Islam. Unfortunately, it’s not. This new religion with the name Islam was stolen and appended to it. Many people who have strong, forceful agendas distort the Qur’an (as I read to you) and distort the Hadith of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal).

Allah forbids people to invoke His Name or the name of His Prophets as partners in their mutual disputes and violence toward one another; yet people don’t pay attention. There is not *tawajjuh*; there is no attentiveness. Then, as He says, inventions against Allah’s Name come about. Just as the early disbelievers and their partners acted, making attractive the slaughter of one another, even of children, in order to lead them to their own destruction, and cause confusion in their religion.

Allah Swt warned them that He would requite them for their inventions. Unfortunately, there is a lot of this cultural baggage and distortion of history for the politicalization of Islam that has entered into the ethos of the Islamic-American scene, and has dominated the global Islamic world that we know today.

Sincere good people are being misled by purpose, or by ignorant leaders, toward this precipice. We find innocent Muslims caught up in the excesses, negligence, and distortions that exist in the worldwide *ummah*. Consequently, they are following these people into the schisms and over the cliff, if you will, into their prejudices, biases, and attitudes ranging from claims of sacred cultural mores, to disputes of interpretation of the Sunnah, the Prophet (sal) or the Hadith. Some claim supremacy of Hadith over Qur'an. Now we also have a group of people who claim supremacy of one school of thought over others. Again, these claims of supremacy of one community over another, in either knowledge of Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet (sal), is really problematic, let alone the fact that we abrogate the truth that was given to us in the Qur'an of the Ahl al Kitab. And we are intolerant of other people of other faiths. How do we get caught up in all these things, *astaghfirh -Llāh?*

The truth is, we should have some anxiety, some fear that maybe we are in danger of going the way of these societies that have come before us. We should take a moment, pause, and think over who we are, what we are, and heed Allah's command to **"hold fast to the rope Allah stretches to you, and be not divided among yourselves."** It's not enough to have that up on a wall, or have it on a banner, or wear it around your head in a bandanna. It has to be engraved in the heart. For those who are in ignorance, we have to be tolerant, and loving, and provide a venue for peace and happiness. Allah Swt said in the Holy Qur'an,

“And obey His Messenger and fall not into disputes lest you lose heart, and power departs from you.” He warns, **“Their doom is because Allah sent down the Book in Truth, but those who seek cause of dispute in the Book are in schism far from the purpose.”** Then as I read to you earlier, **“There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues. You think that it is part of the Book, but it is not part of the Book. They say, it is from Allah, but it is not from Allah. It is they who tell a lie against Allah.”**

People believe those lies, because people may wear an *abaya* like I am, or a *topi* like I am, or have a big long beard, or have a title. They believe those lies. Perhaps the people are not intentionally lying. They believe what they are saying. But we are Muslims in America, and we have to learn how to reflect upon the relevant examples of Qur’an. Why should Muslims in America (and that includes us of course) take on the historical, over-burdening failures of the *ummah* around the world? Why should we follow the manifestations, divisions, and disputes over this *fatwa* or that *fatwa*, over this reported *hadith* or that *hadith*, this contradiction or that contradiction without applying what Allah has given us Himself in the Qur’an, and the guidelines in understanding what is the truth as clearly and as purely as we can? What is our agenda but to do good for each human being and every living thing?

What was the agenda of the Prophet Mohammed (sal)? To start a new religion? No. *Akhlaq*: just to increase and develop the character of people. He said, **“I did not come to create a new religion.”** Because the opponents of Islam today (and the opponents within Islam, the *munafiq* that we hear about every day) have taken some strange delight in this kind of hairsplitting, they wind up mocking Islam, whether they are American Muslims or anywhere. If you look at it, it is like a sideshow in a circus. Should we become partisans to these kinds of conflicts –

certainly not – conflicts between so many so-called proponents of this school of thought or that school of thought, the Sunni-Shi'a conflict? Let us remember who the Ahl al Bayt were. Who was Sidna Ali (ra)? The Prophet (sal) said in a *Sahih hadith*, on the authority of Ibn Masood, ***“Ali ibn Abu Talib is to me as my soul is to my body.”***

How many Muslims who claim themselves to be of the Ala Sunnah Jamat want to hear these things? Ibn Abbas (ra) reported that the Messenger of Allah (sal) said, ***“I am the warner, and Ali is the leader. Ali, those finding the right way after me will find it in you.”*** And Ibn Abbas again reported, that the Prophet (sal) said, ***“I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate. Whoever wants knowledge should come to it through its gate.”*** Does that make me Shi'a because I'm saying that? Or does it make me Muslim because I'm accepting what the Prophet (sal) said? I'm not promoting Shi'iam, Ismailism, or Sunnism. I'm reporting on the essence of Islam through the dynamic of *tariqah* as well as *shar'iah*.

We are, hopefully, people who keep our hearts and minds clear and open. I'm repeating what the Prophet (sal) said to all people, and there are so many more things he said on this subject. But look at the world today. Look at Islam today. Go find the rope to grasp. Where is it? In Qom? In Al Azhar? In the Karoween? In the *madrasas* in Pakistan? In the cells of the Taliban? In Al Qaida? Where is it? My dears, if we are blessed, it is with our Prophet (sal) and with the line from the Ahl al Bayt, and in the line of our *shuyukh* of good people, and in our faith in Allah that manifests in our service to everyone. It's not an idea; it has to be manifest. It is in the love of the Ahl al Kitab. It is in love of creation, and it is the seriousness with which we take the *amanat*. It is to be manifest in humble and grateful and critical ways of thinking of young people, like many sitting here today – young professionals who have piety in their hearts, who are sick of bigotry and prejudice, and sick of

political movements, who have love for the *ambiyā*, and the *rasūls*, and the *awliya-Llāh*, and the people.

No, we have to hold fast to the rope of Allah, indeed. We have to be examples of breaking down these divisions and uniting people of Islam and outside of Islam. That's the only hope for Islam. Right now, I think the only hope for Islam is here in this country, and in the hearts of young people in other parts of the world, who have had a taste of freedom and democracy. I don't mean political democracy; I mean the taste of the freedom to speak, and gather, and act, which is a foundational principle of Islam. It is not a foundational principle of the United States of America, circa 1776. Don't forget the constitution of Medina. Certainly, [it is not a foundational principle] throughout the East in these days.

We look at the people who live in the circus, the sideshow of Islam in the world today, with these tendencies to exalt their tradition, as if the heroes of their own cultures were canonized. [They are] held up to be the heroes of Islam because they might have been *mujahadīn*, or something, in their countries. All they end up doing is cutting each other down, or slaughtering each other, let alone slandering one another, *takfir* of each other, charging one another, saying, "If you question us, you are questioning the Sunnah." It's easy for them to rely on the purported Sunnah, because they elevated the Hadith over the Qur'an, and the Hadith was *daiif*, or at best misunderstood Sahih. Who are we to say? We are to say, "*Astaghfirh -Llāh*, forgive me Allah, if I am wrong in this. Make me understand where I'm wrong. But if I'm right, then let us live good lives and be good Muslims."

The other extreme are the people who reject out of hand the Qur'anic confirmed Traditions of the Prophet (sal), where the sayings and actions of the Prophet were underpinned and have their foundations in the overriding principles of the Qur'an.

That's always the litmus test: is it supported in the Qur'an? It's all right to have a *hadith quds*, everyone accepts that. There are some *hadith* that are somewhat questionable, that you can still get a great teaching from; but the litmus test is do you find the same principle in the Qur'an? That's the test. We should be very careful not to fall into any trap laid by Shaytan, who, as the Qur'an says, "**whispers and then withdraws,**" then comes later as an arbiter to settle disputes with cunning and flowery speech.

Let us not be deceived, nor think we can outflank the Shaytan, while indulging in the schisms he sets out. It is just like the political Islamic movements that set out these straw men, then come back and solve them, and "prove" to the people that they are the true Islam. Allah says: "**Shaytan and his tribe watch you from a position where you cannot see them.**" I think if you look not too hard, you can see the Shaytan at work pretty much anywhere. It certainly was not missing at Sandy Hook at the elementary school, or at the theater in Colorado, or in the islands in Norway. That doesn't mean he was ruling; he just wasn't missing. He was there, and people are prone to listen. After all, Hazrat Adam (as) and Hazrati Hawa (ra) listened; but they repented.

We can see him clearly here: who is Shaytan? We see him in the world every day. That's another *khutbah*. We all know evil when we see it, just like a physician can identify a heart attack or a hemorrhage, or a teacher a grammatical error, or a dentist a cavity, or a businessman or woman a potential client. *Furqan*, being discriminating, is a character trait that can be used for the good, and should be. Can we not see that these created disputes are an attempt to move the innocent Muslim away from his or her commitment to feed the poor, to care for the orphans, to clothe the naked, or to feed the homeless, or build a balanced community?

Religion becomes one of criticizing or attacking the person with whom they differ, most often on very insignificant issues. Unfortunately, these individual differences are exploited time and time again, especially by people who have billions of dollars to use to exploit them. When you exploit them, then the seeds of differences grow, and sectarianism grows, and nationalism takes on a different flavor—not love of country and people, not at all. But it is the concept of some kind of Islamic state, which Allah, the Prophet (sal), and many who came thereafter say can only come after the Mahdi.

Then there is *fitna*, that subversion and rebellion that comes about and is really a shame. We really have to watch out for that. We don't watch out for it by people like me standing on a *minbar*, telling everybody they are going to hell. Those before us were idol worshipers. Those around us today are idol worshipers; and among us, too, we have the tendency to worship idols in materialism. But it's different to use something, than to worship it. There are those who took the angels and other prophets and made them equal to Allah. They began to mention their names with every mention of the Name of Allah.

When Allah the One and Only is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror. But when gods other than He are mentioned, they are filled with joy.

Think of the case of Isa (as). They started by telling the stories written about him in the New Testament (Mark, Luke, John, and Matthew) that he was divine. Gradually, they included Isa as a co-equal of Allah. When they say, "the Lord," and you don't know whether they mean Allah or the Prophet Isa (as). It's re-stimulated every Sunday at every church people go to, this confusion—not unlike the things that are re-stimulated in the *madrasas* and *masajid*. They have taken the Injil and thrown it

out, just as the Torah was thrown out, and the Qur'an is being destroyed around us. The Prophet Muhammed (sal) told us how Allah cleared the name of Isa (as), and has put it in its rightful highest place. Allah is One. The Revelation is One. He is Allah. None is like unto Him. No partner, no associates.

Muslims of this country have to be aware of this cultural baggage of extremism that has been imported here, as if it was legitimate Sunnah, legitimate *fiqh*, legitimate Shar'iah, legitimate Dīn. Such baggage is propagated by zealous people, whether they are innocent or not, who accuse others of *bida*, unbelief, and deviation, but who bring so much *bida* to Islam that it is unbelievable, standing very piously, exalting the Sunnah and the Qur'an, engaging others in arguments, and splitting hearts apart. Someone who I don't quote very often, for historical and other reasons, Imam Nawawi, reported that the Prophet (sal) repeated three times: ***"Ruined are the people who indulge in hairsplitting."*** We know that when he repeated something three times, it was very serious.

It's very important that we begin to be able to see through our Islam, through our *muraqabah* / meditation, through our *tariqah* orientation, the modus operandi for these soldiers of destruction in the army of Shaytan, whether they know it or not. What did the German soldiers say after World War II? "I was only following orders." As if one could not refuse an order. What are these mercenaries doing? They bring a lot of harm to Islam and to innocent Muslims in America. I call them mercenaries. Many of them were sent here under the guise of studying to infiltrate the *masajid*. It was not for terrorist acts, but for something much more damaging over time, perhaps—extremism in the mentality of misunderstanding what the *Dīn* is, and leading people astray. There is nothing more beautiful than innocence. People are like little birds, standing up and reciting selected *hadith* in Arabic, very contextual for the time and circumstances. They speak rhetoric with such authority as to

confirm the *hikma* and the *din* of Islam, except they don't understand what they are saying, or the damage they are doing. Aside from that, I must say, it's insulting. It's insulting to my intelligence and to your intelligence.

The real sincerity, the real knowledge lies in the heart. It doesn't matter how strongly a person can speak, how they embellish their argument, or how much Arabic they can speak, especially new people who can understand very little other than "*Asalaamu aleikum*," or the al-Fatiha. But it is time for a balanced Muslim community to stand together, to stop the purveyors of deliberate confusion, of deliberate disunity. It's time for Muslims all over the world, especially young Muslims who have access to the world through technology; who have tasted what is light, beautiful and truth, the *bida hasana*; who have tasted the goodness in the world, in people different than themselves; who have traveled, studied and understand that everyone wants the same thing for their families.

Everyone likes something that is good, that tastes good, and looks good—not something that is ugly and threatening. It is time for that balance to come about. As Muslims, we need to repent of our own wrong actions. We should study the Qur'an deeply, and the teachings of those whom we know. And we should take the work we do in our secular organization, Legacy, and expand it and expand it, because it's good work: in public health, in conflict management, in women's rights, all over the Middle East, the Gulf, Central Asia, and Indonesia, and youth work. We should expand it and expand it, not for our own glory, but because it's the right thing to do to help people understand how to live their Islam, how to live their faith, whatever faith they are. There is no excuse not to. We shouldn't conflate things and we shouldn't confuse things. So that's the beginning of what I wanted to talk about. Thank you for your patience. *Asalaamu aleikum*.