



[The Formula for the Dangerous Disease](#)
of Discord and Disagreement in the Community

Allah Swt said in the Qur'an:

This is one community and I am your Lord, so worship Me.

He also said:

So set your purpose, O Mohammed, for religion as a man by nature upright, the nature of Allah by which He has created man. There is no altering of the laws of Allah's creation. That is the right religion, though most men know not. Turn unto Him only and be careful of your duty to Him. And establish worship and be not of those who ascribe partners unto Him.

And again:

Of those who split up their religion and became schismatics, each sect exalting in its tenets. (30:32)

Finally He said:

Obey Allah and His Messenger, and dispute not with one or the other lest you falter and your strength departs from you. Be steadfast. Lo, Allah is with the steadfast.

These lessons on community and on character, on the realities of differences and schism, on the means to obey Allah and not dispute with one another are great lessons. Another Friday has come; another week in our lives has passed. We wonder what we have accomplished in the way of our life and of our *dīn*. The world we live in today, especially what is called the “Muslim world,” is afflicted by many social diseases, many political diseases, and many physical disease. Those diseases have spread to almost every aspect of its being, affecting each one of us in some way. Or at least attacking what I would call our spiritual immune system. There is moral torpor. There is intellectual paralysis. There is subversion from within and from without. There is dissatisfaction, political upheaval, subjugation from outside in some places. There is an absence of justice often, and fair dealing in the world. There is exploitation and corruption of individuals and extremes of ignorance, as well as disease. Not to mention the overriding poverty, and waste, and dependence and insecurity and discord, and internecine and civil warfare. Now, for the bad news...

This list is long and it is painful. It is very painful to read it and contemplate it. The number and gravity of these diseases and afflictions is capable of wiping out whole nations as we are seeing, if not segments of this planet, wiping people totally off the face of the earth. Today there is a young girl here on this campus from Rwanda. It was not so long ago that Rwanda almost was gone in war. Today it is Syria. Unfortunately, the world still lives with a sense of revenge, too. This world is well-endowed with resources, and some people are well-endowed with wealth, so it makes no sense that there is a lack of resources, a lack of support. It makes no sense that diseases are not being cured, one after another. But that’s the way it is. Then add to that, the natural catastrophes.

Beset by these catastrophes and afflictions, it's no wonder we wonder how the universal *ummah*, the community of believers, the Muslim *ummah* has survived. Sometimes we think it might be in the final days. That this *ummah* has been spared and continues to exist to this day is due to the fact that it still holds to the legacy of the Qur'an and Sharia, keeping it intact, as well as the example of the Prophet Mohammed (sal). It also might be due in part to the fact that there still exist some elements of righteousness in this community, people who generally seek Allah's guidance, people who are sincerely repentant and seek His forgiveness. Since Allah created everything, and it's a creation of Allah that we live in it, then why do we ask forgiveness of Him? If we can do something, then it's okay to do anything, because Allah created it and it must be all within His plan. But of course we forget that we have choice.

Where our community is today is we are not choosing the right for the right reasons, and often the wrong is being chosen. It is a very strange kind of logic about power and need. We can infer from the Qur'anic verses that I recited that say Allah did not choose to punish the disbelieving people because the Prophet (sal) himself was among them, and there remained the possibility that they might yet repent as long as the Prophet (sal) was among them, that there might be some righteous people left in the world. Arguably the most dangerous disease that now affects the Muslim *ummah* is the disease of discord, disagreement, *takfir* / accusation, false knowledge, ignorance, keeping people ignorant. These diseases are based on a dialectical attitude or concept in Islam called "*jaddāl*."

Jaddāl means "stubborn adherence," stubborn adherence to one's opinions or positions which are at variance with others. You defend a position. You prevail on others to accept it. You hold it against them if they don't. This "*jaddāl*" is poisoning; not just in the Muslim world. But some of you heard the former member of

Congress Martin Lancaster just a few minutes ago say the same thing about the politics in this country. These are all elements of dissipation. *Jaddāl* implies carrying out a discussion in a contentious manner, in order to gain the upper hand. Say whatever you have to say, do whatever you have to do to stay in power. It's used in the sense of braiding a rope. It conveys a sense of stretching, arm-twisting, tying people up, people disputing with each other while each endeavors others to accept their point of view. This is the inner meaning of this word. This disease of disagreement and discord within Islam has become an all-pervasive disease. It affects virtually every area, every talent, every society, every community, almost every subject in Islam.

If you go on the Internet, you can see all the differences of opinions and how hostile people are. It's an appalling influence that has penetrated the ideas, beliefs, morality, behavior, and ethics in the ways of speaking and interacting with one another to such a degree that it's expected there is no *adab*. It has affected both the short-term and long-term goals and objectives that we should hope would be the objectives of Islam in the world for peace and justice and tolerance and understanding, love for one's brother, one's neighbor, rights of all people, minorities, and women. This dark cloud hanging over the multitude of Muslims and over their souls is a cloud that poisons the atmosphere, that ruins the environment, that numbs people's minds and hearts, and leaves them unable to create or even procreate the next generation of real believers. It creates a kind of sterility.

We look around and see that there are not just 2-3 groups of people arguing with each other in this world, but there are huge groups of people in argumentation—on the streets in Tahrir Square, in Libya, the war in Syria. The impression it gives is that all Islamic teachings, all commands, all prohibitions and prescriptions, which are at the disposal and the beck and call of the *ummah* are only to encourage people to

discord, and make them revel in some internecine strife. That's what it looks like. If it looks like that from within, what does it look like from without? Needless to say, this is a trend that is a total contradiction of Qur'an and Sunnah. After stressing the paramount truth of Islam, which is *tawhid* in Qur'an and Sunnah, the unity within the *ummah* and within all people is forgotten. The object is to treat and illuminate any disagreement within the *ummah* that disturbs the peace and harmony in the Muslim relationship, and ruins the brotherhood of those who believe. That's what Islam should be about.

It may also be true to say that after associating others in worship with Allah, there is nothing more repugnant to the teachings of Islam than the discord of the community, however you define the community. Whether it is discord within the larger, Islamic community, or national community, or even this community. We should avoid discord at all costs. The commands of Allah and His prophets are very, very clear in calling for unity and solidarity and reconciliation between people's hearts, and marshaling their efforts for a single cause. Anything in the world is just an opportunity to practice. If the cause is for health, for political stability, for education, it's just to practice unity, community, communication, humility, gratitude. That's our duty. Not just as Muslims, but as Muslims living in that world. Not just as Muslims, but as Muslims living in this community. We have to call to unity, have solidarity between us, reconcile the differences in our own hearts, marshal our efforts to a single cause.

Since real, true Muslims, which, *inshā'a-Llāh*, we are or strive to be, have pure faith in worshipping Allah swt; since in the Prophet (sal) we have faith in the scripture and direction he gives, we turn in our *salat* and acknowledge our reason for existence, which is all one and the same for each of us. We should feel united in a common endeavor. Allah says: **"This is your community. It is a single**

community, and I am your Lord and your Sustainer; therefore, worship Me.” In spite of this, Muslims have unfortunately forsaken the uncompromising belief in and worship of Allah alone, and abandoned the call to join forces with one another for the common good. We need to be fully conscious of the dangers of the situation, because we interact with people who are brothers and sisters in Islam. We must make sincere attempts to deal with the roots of the crisis of our Muslim disunity, first within ourselves, our beliefs, our practices, in our regularity in our community, and in the way we communicate and what we focus on, and how we accomplish what we do. We need to restore the dimension of faith in our lives and in the hearts of Muslims all over. That dimension has almost ceased to be a primary factor in regulating Muslim relationships.

This is the result of a distorted understanding of Islam, harmful practices, pressures and impositions that come from being in and amongst non-believing individuals. The restoration of the faith and the understanding is the only true guarantee for rectifying all of our relationships, ridding ourselves of the differences (or at least appreciating the positive things about differences), and removing all traces of rancor and disagreement. How comforting and delightful it would be if we didn't have to see all those differences as negative and fight the battles that are being fought.

How can we avoid being caught by this disease? Is there an inoculation for it? Can we get tested for it? Can we catch it at its early stages? Is there a sound knowledge that Islam can give us, that would give us appreciation for the various courses of actions and attitudes we have? We would know what is recommended, what is permissible, what is compulsory, what is suggested, what is voluntary. We would keep before us the higher objectives in the foreground of our discussions and our decisions. We would always be striving, always be wary of constant disagreement

with each other, avoiding it like the plague. Disagreement in itself would be a flag. We would move toward agreement and understanding. Argumentation would be proof that we are on the same path, or the straight path, for that matter. Our ethics and values would be different, because undoubtedly Muslims have lost much of their ethic and norms of proper Islamic behavior.

I know it sounds terrible, but look around the world. Look at what we see, even if it's not war, and poverty, and obvious disease. Look at the subtle disagreements, the innuendos, and the *takfir*. It has to end. The Qur'an tells us, we will end up "**...in impotence and ruin. Such are the warnings of Allah. And do not dispute with one another lest you fail and your moral strength deserts you.**" That's a pretty powerful statement. This is what happens in disagreement and disputation. You feel weak. Not just morally weak; but you feel physically weak. The Qur'an relates the history of the followers of the early prophets so that we might derive lessons and warnings from them. He shows clearly how nations rise and fall, how civilizations are built, how they flourish, and how they die. We are warned that decline and downfall are direct consequences of disunity and diseases of discord, and sliding into narrow factionalism and schism and criticisms.

And be not among those who ascribe Divinity to any but Allah, among those who have broken the unity of their faith and become sects, each group delighting in what they, themselves, believe and follow.

How prescient is... it's a silly thing to say, because Allah swt knows everything... for us to hear this today, when it was revealed 1434 some years ago. Disputes that lead to division and disunity are the same as abandoning the guidance of the Prophet and becoming alienated. Allah Swt addresses the Prophet in the Qur'an with regard to those who have broken the unity of their faith and have become sects: "**You have**

nothing to do with them.” That’s clear. Have nothing to do with them. We have this perverted sense that we have to tolerate the intolerable. We have to make excuses for ignorance. We have to not monitor what we say or who we are speaking to, what might be offensive to someone that we may think is a joke. There is a condemnation in this verse of all sectarianism arising out of people’s intolerance and mutually exclusive claims to be the only true exponents of Divine teaching.

Today we find it hard to understand why anyone should listen to anyone who would say, “You should have nothing to do with them.” Children rebel against their parents when they say, “That person is not good for you. You should have nothing to do with them.” They say, “Prove to me why! You don’t understand; that’s a nice person.” They have no faith in the insight of the parent or the experience of someone with knowledge, let alone Allah. We don’t want to hurt the feelings of strangers; but we hurt the feelings of loved ones. We don’t want to trespass on some stranger or someone we just met lest they should think ill of us—yet we will be defiant to those who love us and care for us. Doesn’t that sound a bit strange? That’s what happened to the Prophet (sal) also.

The disputes and divisions and disunity we find are all discussed in the Qur’an. The problem is not that the people of the revelation had too little knowledge, or their knowledge was misleading. Their undoing was that they used their knowledge to commit injustice and sow mutual antagonism. The fact is every human being has these tendencies. It is not a criteria of determining who should be holder of final revelation; the history is clear, whether the Jewish or Christian community in pre-Qur’anic times. The fact is we are made stronger by realizing that there will be no replacement, no abrogation of the Qur’an. Nothing is coming after it.

There is some optimism in all this. There is optimism that the diseases which the *ummah* are afflicted with are not terminal if we don't want them to be, because the cure is in our hands. It may rise and fall as the spiritual flu comes in the season, leaving us feeble and susceptible to more disease, but if we can get this internal disintegration to cease, then the *ummah* can come back onto the right source. And there are possibilities for doing that. First we have to recognize there are natural differences in life, and people are different and view things differently. They conduct their affairs differently. We have to be tolerant. We have to understand that people look at things not the same way I or you do. And that there is an inherent uniqueness to each individual that contributes largely to the diversity, which is central in building the human society. Allah said, **"Had I wanted to, I would have made you all one community."**

It would be impossible to establish social relations between people who are all alike and who all have the same capacity. So we have to have patience; embrace the diversity; be tolerant; not think that we are the ones who have all the answers, so when we hear some other point of view, to really entertain it. Or as our guest recently said, "Learn to listen." It's not the case maybe today, but it could be the case tomorrow. We want to come to a time when there is no *takfir*, no accusation, no spreading of that disease. We want to be able to inoculate people from those points of view. We trust that human beings will know the truth because Allah says: **"The truth will stand out from the false."**

When people have a forum for ideas, when they have an opportunity to discuss, when they have an opportunity to be together, *suhbat*, to study together, these are very, very important things that should not be pushed to the side. Being a community means more than occupying the same land or having the same name or the same religion. It means working together for the common good. We have here in

this community managed to a very high degree to have mutual respect and agreement, but we should sit down and try to examine why it is, whether it's just around my personality because I'm the founder and leader; or whether it's because we are soul-searching individuals, or whether it's because people have really begun to develop their faith in Allah; or whether it's because they are regular in their practices; or because we see the responsibility for our future with our children; or because we see the corruption outside of us and we disdain it. We need to take the time to think about it, and to dive and to study.

There is a formula there. We have to know what that formula is, and the formula is in the Qur'an and the teachings. And we need to find the time. The responsibility is not the other person's; the responsibility is mine and yours. During Ramadan this is a time for us to reflect and for us to make some promises also, *inshā'a-llāh*.

Asalaamu aleikum.