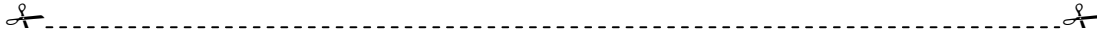




Living the Sunna: Part I Additional Exercises

By Imam Muhammad Magid with Samuel Ross

Below are seven more exercises we can use to help us draw closer to Allah and His Messenger. Please feel free to print them out and use them in your home, office, car, etc. May God help us to be among those whose love for the Prophet brings us near to him in this world and the next. Ameen.



Week 2: Gratitude

God says in the Qur'an, "It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and hearts: that ye may give thanks" (16:78).

Once, Aisha observed the Prophet standing in prayer for so long that his feet began to visibly swell. She asked him why he did this, since his behavior was impeccable and all his mistakes past and future had been forgiven. He replied, "Should I not be a grateful servant?" (Sahih Muslim Book 39 Number 6774).

What are some of the blessings in our life that we fail to acknowledge? Let us thank God for them verbally as well as physically by employing them, whatever they may be: our limbs, our minds, our wealth, our health, etc. in a manner that would be pleasing to him. For each of them was created with the purpose of helping us to draw near to Him (51:56). Our likeness when we do otherwise is that of an ungrateful friend, who though given the gift of a beautiful Persian carpet, saddens the giver by using it as his doormat.

Week 3: Patience

God says in the Qur'an, "O you who believe! Be patient and excel in patience and remain steadfast, and be mindful of your duty to Allah, that you may prosper" (3:200).

The Prophet was a paragon of patience. The Prophet's servant, Anas, reported for example that in ten years of serving him not once did he ever hear the Prophet (peace be upon him) exclaim "Oof" out of impatience or inquire, "Why did you do such and such or why didn't you do such and such?" (Bukhari Volume 8 Book 73 Number 64).

Moreover, during the Prophet's lifetime he was variously derided as a poet, a magician, and a madman. People threw stones at his feet until they bled. His neighbors left refuse on his doorstep and rubbed camel dung on him as he prayed. Yet throughout he restrained himself, never acting out of personal enmity.

In what situations do we find ourselves feeling impatient? Practice having patience in these situations and use the example of the Prophet for inspiration to persevere.

Week 4: Kindness

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Be kind, for whenever kindness becomes part of something, it beautifies it. Whenever it is taken from something, it leaves it tarnished." He also said: "Make things simple and do not complicate them. Calm people and do not drive them away." (Imam Bukhari's Book of Muslim Morals and Manners.)

Once a Bedouin entered the mosque and began to urinate. The companions of the Prophet rushed at him screaming, but the Prophet said "don't interrupt him; leave him alone." Afterwards, when the Bedouin had finished, the Prophet approached him and explained that the mosque was not a place for urine and filth but for the remembrance of God. He then said to his companions, "You have been sent to make things easy for the people and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them." He then called for a bucket of water to be poured over where the Bedouin had relieved himself.

(Sahih Muslim Book 2, Number 0559 and Sahih Bukhari Volume 8 Book 73 Number 149)

How kind are we in our interactions with others? In what areas of our lives and with which persons can we practice greater kindness?

Week 5: Excellence of Speech

The Prophet was once asked, "Whose Islam is best?" He replied, "The one from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are safe." (Sahih Muslim #59)

The Prophet did not talk indecently nor engage in obscene language. He did not scream while speaking, nor was he rude or spoke indecently. He did not interrupt someone talking and did not begin speaking when someone else was busy speaking. If one exceeded the limits he would stop him or would get up and leave (so that that person would stop). (Shmail Imam Tirmidhi Hadith #330, 334)

Does our speech conform to the Prophet's standards? Which aspect of the Prophetic paradigm for speech do we have the most trouble implementing? Let us strive to imitate him in it.

Week 6: Tolerance and responding with what is better

It was said of the Prophet that the more one acted foolishly toward him, the more he tolerated it.

Once, the great Jewish scholar Zayd bin Sa'nah (RA), made an advance purchase of dates from the Prophet (peace be upon him). A few days before the dates were due to be delivered he went to the Prophet and insulted him and his family. He said, "O Muhammad, you do not want to pay my debt. I swear by God, that I know all the children of 'Abdul Muttalib very well. You are very poor payers". Umar, who was sitting with Muhammad (peace be upon him), became enraged and chastised him. The Prophet then turned to Umar and calmly asked him to deliver the dates and to add an additional 140 pounds as recompense for having yelled at him. Afterwards, Zayd explained that all along he had been testing the Prophet to see if he had the two remaining signs of prophecy: gentleness and tolerance. Having found them both he accepted Islam (Shmail Imam Tirmidhi #330.).

Who tests our forbearance in this life? Whose hurtful actions might we practice better tolerance toward and respond with kindness?

Week 7: Generosity

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Charity does not diminish wealth." (Riyadh-us-Saleheen, Volume 1, Hadith 556). He also advised, "Shake hands and rancor will disappear. Give presents to each other and love each other and enmity will disappear" (Muwatta Imam Malik Book 47, Number 47.4.16).

The Prophet was known to be extremely generous. Once for example, a woman brought a gift of some clothing to the Prophet (peace be upon him). He accepted it and wore it. When a man observing later him commented, "How nice it is! Please give it to me," the Prophet replied went home, folded it, and had it sent to him.

Another time someone gave a gift of some mutton to the Prophet which he promptly gave away saving only the shoulder for himself. When Aisha commented, "all of it is gone except the shoulder" he corrected her: "On the contrary, all of it has been preserved except the shoulder." By this he meant that the reward of giving the mutton to charity lasts forever whereas the enjoyment of a piece of God's creation is limited.

With whom or what institutions have we been concealing the Prophetic example of generosity? With whom do we feel enmity in our lives? Approach them and give them a gift.

Week 8: Control over his appetites

The Prophet said, "No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath." (Imam Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 47).

It was recorded that the Prophet never ate until he was completely full. He also endured great hunger during his life time. Once for example, two whole months passed in which he subsisted only on only water and dates. When he was approached by his companions complaining of hunger they found that he (peace be upon him) had tied two stones to his stomach to ease the pangs of hunger.

How often do we fill our stomachs to capacity while eating? How often do we find it hard to pray and remain mindful of Allah because our stomachs are stuffed? Let us try to control our appetites by eating moderately and restraining ourselves before we reach satiety.