

KHUTBA

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English

Whom should one befriend?

Fellow Muslims!

Fear Allah as he should be feared and stand firm in your obedience to Him for He has promised those who return to Him and stand firm in their belief in Him the best reward; He says that which translates to: ***“Indeed, those who have said, “Our Lord is Allah” and then remained on a right course – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve”*** [46:13]

One of the greatest things that help Muslims to gain piety, righteousness and to remain upon the path of truth and guidance is keeping the company of good people and avoiding evil company. This is because man, by his nature, is influenced by his friends and companions and adopts their characteristics and mannerisms. Also, man’s character is known through his brothers and friends as pointed out by the Prophet (saws) when he said: **“Man follows the religion of his friend, so let every one of you examine whom he befriends.”** [Abu Dawod and others]

Abdullah Ibn Mas’ood said: “Nothing reveals anything more about a man than the company which he keeps.” Some wise men say. “People think of a man what they think of his companions.” Little wonder then that Islam attaches immense importance on the matter of companionship and friendship so much so that the Prophet (saws) directed every individual of the Muslim community to select only righteous and pious people to be their friends and companions. He said, **“Do not befriend except the believer and nobody should eat your food (with you) except the pious.”** [Abu Daawood and others]

The Messenger of Allah (saws) also laid a perceptible example for a good and an evil companion when he said, **“The example of the good and the evil companion is like that of a bearer of musk and a person blowing a pair of bellows. As for the musk bearer, he either gives you some (musk), or you buy from him or at least you get a pleasant smell from him. As for the bellows blower he either burns your clothes or (at least) you get an unpleasant smell from him.”** [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim]

Al-Haafidh ibn Hajar, while commenting on this Hadith said, “There is in this Hadith prohibition of keeping the company of those who can harm one in religious and worldly matters; and an encouragement for keeping the company of those who can benefit one in these matters.”

It is then only wise and logical that man should keep the company of those who benefit him in matters of his religion and life, for the best companion is the one who is pious, righteous, possesses noble conduct and manners, has a clear conscience and is ambitious. After these characteristics are present, the next most desirable qualities are being learned in the sciences, arts and Islamic Jurisprudence as well as possessing wisdom. These are the characteristics of those that one can feel comfortable with and be pleased to be in their company. This is because of their sincerity, assistance during difficulties and one’s safety from any evil actions from them. Whoever is fortunate enough to have such a companion has this as a sign for his happiness and success. He must therefore hold fast to him, fulfil his right of companionship and be truthful with him. He should also respect him, share with him his happy and sad moments, assist him in hardship and

overlook his mistakes, because no man is infallible and it is enough of an honour for a man that his faults are enumerable.

Brothers in faith! The worst of all companions is the one who exerts a bad influence on his friend, is weak religiously, evil in conduct, has no clear conscience and nothing good is said of his behaviour. He is concerned only with achieving his base desires even if that is at the expense of his religion and manliness. He may even have a total disregard for religion and chivalry and dishonour the rights of friendship. Befriending such a person is a miserable act and a sure path to desolation because of the damage that such a person can cause, such as diversion from the remembrance of Allah and His obedience and prevention from having noble conduct and means of manliness. This is in addition to acclimatisation to obscene talk, instigation to the committing of immoral acts, wasting of time in fruitless pursuits, wasteful expenditure and a host of other forbidden things.

Let us ponder, dear brothers in Islam, over the condition of those who are afflicted with drug addiction, perpetration of immoral acts and earning from unlawful means - like interest, bribery extortion and the like. Look at the miserable situation that they and their families are in and the evil impact they have on those with whom they mix and befriend. It is in fact a sign of utter wretchedness that one sits with this type of people who offer nothing except sorrow and regret - for they may destroy their religion and conduct and make them lose both this world and the next and that is the most evident loss. Allah says that which translates to: ***“And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands [in regret] he will say, “Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way. Oh, woe to me! I wish I had not taken that one as a friend. He led me away from the remembrance after it had come to me. And ever is Satan, to man, a deserter.”*** [25:27–29]

These are some characteristics of the pious and wise whom one should befriend and of the evil and immoral people whom we should avoid.

All people were created good. Thereafter, they have fallen in to two different categories. The first group have chosen the path of goodness until it became part of their character, the second have chosen evil until that became part of their character. The judicious and discrete person therefore judges people with the criteria of Islam. Whenever he meets someone and judges that his goodness and benefit outweigh his evil and harm, he takes him as a companion - and vice versa. Whoever aspires for friendship and companionship of righteous and pious people will be made fortunate to achieve that in accordance with his intention and efforts.

Brothers in faith! Let us be reminded that all friendships will end in hatred and enmity sooner or later, except those between pious people for they are everlasting in this world and the next. Therefore fear Allah and be dutiful to Him, follow the way of the rightly guided people and the pious by making friends with only good people and avoiding the sinful and wrongdoers. Allah says that which translates to: ***“Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.”*** [43:67]

Fellow Muslims! Fear Allah as He should be feared and die not except as Muslims. Reflect – May Allah have mercy on you – over the sorry condition of many people today, especially the youth and their corruption in matters of belief and conduct. Reflect on how that was caused by keeping bad company, with those who call to falsehood and the following of evil desires through different methods. They spread evil and poisonous material and make sure that our youth leave the path of truth, virtue and orderliness to follow the way of error and allurements – despite Allah’s warning when He says that which translates to: ***“And do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever (in) neglect.”*** [18:28]

This phenomenon is a harbinger of doom and calamity for this Ummah if the reformers among the Muslims and concerned men like scholars, thinkers, educators and journalists do not exert all their efforts and make use of all available means to reform the youth morally. They must also protect them against those who call to evil and those who are slaves to their lustful whims and desires. Fathers and mothers are therefore obliged, before anybody else, to take good care of their children, nurture them on Islamic teachings and manners and protect them from bad company and all other avenues to evil, in order that they may become good children and prosper in this world and the next. Parents, by doing so, will only be doing that which Allah has made obligatory on them.

Dear fathers and mothers! These are the great responsibilities laid upon you by Allah, so discharge them diligently. Allah addresses you with that which translates to: ***“O you who have believed! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are (appointed) angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what he commands them but do what they are commanded.”*** [66:6]