

YOUTH CORNER

By Sherif Alkassimi (© 2020 IslamReligion.com)

Tips to Prevent the Spread of Viruses

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has taken the entire world by surprise, it is worth noting that Islam, the religion of mercy, long ago mentioned valuable tips that medical science would later confirm help prevent the spread of illnesses, plagues and viruses, including:

1. **Washing Hands.** Islam strongly recommends the washing of hands. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, "**Wash your hands after you wake up; you do not know where your hands have moved while you sleep.**"[1] In addition to after waking up Muslims also wash their hands during an act known as "wudu" – an act of cleaning various parts of the body starting off with washing each hand three times" – that is a prerequisite to performing the five daily prayers. Furthermore, the Prophet told us that when washing, we should make sure to wash in-between the finger joints,[2] which medically speaking is essential in-order to kill germs.
2. **Cleanliness.** The importance of cleanliness can be emphasized in the saying of the Prophet that, "**Cleanliness is half of faith.**"[3] Cleanliness is of so much importance that many acts of worship cannot be performed until one becomes in a clean state. A Muslim cannot pray, hold the Quran, nor circumambulate the Kabah until they perform wudu, which includes the washing of the hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, and feet. Likewise after sexual intercourse a Muslim must take a shower before he/she can carry out certain acts of worship.

It is also highly recommended to take a complete shower before attending the weekly Friday prayer at a mosque. A well-known saying of the Prophet goes even further and tells us of ten acts of cleanliness that one should implement for their own well-being, including snuffing water in the nose, cutting the nails, removing armpit hair, shaving pubic hair, and cleaning one's backside with water after answering the call of nature. Furthermore, even the using of a "miswak", a tree twig used for cleaning teeth, which is equivalent to present day brush and toothpaste, is something that is recommended and liked by God [4].

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The Quran (2:222) mentions, "**Indeed, God loves those who repent and loves those who keep themselves pure.**" Implementing the above-mentioned points helps one stay clean and hence less prone to illness.

3. **Drinking and Eating Guidelines.** The Prophet forbade people from breathing into a vessel or cup while drinking from it[5] and forbade the drinking of water directly from the mouth of a water skin.[6] Not breathing into a cup and not drinking from the same cup with someone else are two universal acts of hygiene that help prevent the transmission of disease. Islam also tells us to cover food and drinks when we go to sleep[7] and forbade people from urinating in still water.[8] Finally, Islam dislikes the act of overeating; an act that can cause over a dozen medical conditions; the Prophet mentioned, "**The food for two persons is sufficient for three, and the food of three persons is sufficient for four persons.**"[9]
4. **Cleaning of Clothes.** The Prophet used to clean his clothes with his very own hands, and Islam informs us that God likes to see His servant dress well. The Quran (74:4) mentions, "**And purify your clothes.**"
5. **Covering One's Sneeze.** It is narrated that, "**When the Prophet sneezed, he used to place his hand or a garment on his mouth, to lessen the noise;**"[10] an act that is strongly recommended at times of infection in order to prevent the spread of germs to others.
6. **Social Quarantine.** Remarkably, over fourteen centuries ago the Prophet mentioned the following, "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place,"[11] and "If you hear that it (plague) has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it."[12] Experts strongly advise at times of outbreaks that no one leaves their homes and that no one travels to other locations.

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HAJJ CANCELLATIONS DOWN THE HISTORY

Cancellation of Hajj is not unprecedented. Hajj has been cancelled many times before in Islamic history due to disease, conflict, the activities of bandits and raiders, or other reasons.

Though Hajj has been cancelled several times over the centuries, it was never interrupted since the foundation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 or the beginning of the 20th century, not even during the Spanish flu pandemic of 1917-18 that killed millions of people worldwide. But if Saudi Arabia cancels 2020's Hajj, it will be added to a list of almost 40 dramatic cancellations since the first Hajj in the year 629. Some of the most striking cancellations in history are:

Year 865: Massacre on Arafat Mountain

In the year 865 AD during his conflict with the Abbasid Caliphate, based in Baghdad, Ismail bin Yousef, also known as Al-Safak, launched an attack on the holy Mountain of Arafat, overlooking Mecca, massacring pilgrims gathered there. The raid forced Hajj to be cancelled.

Year 930: Qarmatian attack

Perhaps the most infamous cancellation of the Hajj pilgrimage took place in the 10th century AD, which corresponded to the third century of the Islamic calendar, after an obscure sect took over the holy site in Mecca.

The Qarmatians were a heterodox sect based in eastern Arabia, who established their own state under Abu Taher al-Janabi. Their society was egalitarian, with American author Kenneth Rexroth calling them the "only communistic society to control a large territory" before the 20th century. They considered the Hajj to be a pagan ritual and in the year 930 AD Abu Taher carried out a vicious attack on Mecca during the Hajj season.

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According to historic accounts, the Qarmatians killed 30,000 pilgrims while mockingly chanting verses of the Quran at them and dumped their bodies in the sacred Zamzam well. They also looted the Grand Mosque and then stole [the Black Stone](#) from the Kaaba and took it to the island of Bahrain. Hajj was then suspended for a decade until the Black Stone was returned to Mecca.

The Qarmatians were a sect who believed in an egalitarian society and considered pilgrimage a pagan ritual.

Year 983: Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphates

Politics, too, has disrupted Hajj. In the year 983 political disputes between the rulers of two caliphates - the Abbasids of Iraq and Syria and the Fatimids of Egypt - got in the way of Muslims travelling to Mecca for pilgrimage. It would be eight years until Hajj was held again, in 991.

Year 1831: Plague

Not only conflicts and massacres have cancelled Hajj. A plague from India hit Mecca in 1831 and killed three-quarters of the pilgrims there, who had endured weeks of travel through dangerous and barren lands to perform Hajj.

Years 1837-1858: Series of epidemics

In a span of almost two decades, Hajj was halted three times, leaving pilgrims unable to head to Mecca for a total of seven years.

In 1837, another plague hit the holy city, putting things on hold until 1840.

Then in 1846 a bout of cholera hit Mecca, killing more than 15,000 people, and plagued its inhabitants until 1850. Outbreaks returned in 1865 and 1883.

In 1858, another global cholera pandemic arrived in the city, prompting Egyptian pilgrims to run away en masse to Egypt's Red Sea shores, where they were held in quarantine.

103. Surah Al Asr (The Declining Day, The Time)

Period of Revelation

Although some regard it as a Madani Surah, yet a great majority of the commentators are of the opinion that it is a Makki Surah. It's subject matter also indicates that it must have been revealed during the earliest stages of Islam at Makkah, when the message of Islam was being presented in brief but highly impressive sentences so that the listeners who heard them once could not forget them even if they wanted to. Due to the impact it created on their lives, they were automatically committed to memory.

Theme and Subject Matter

This Surah is a matchless example of concise and exact use of words and comprehensiveness. A whole world of meaning has been compressed into its few brief words, which is too vast in content to be fully expressed even in a book. In it, in a clear and concise manner, it has been pointed out to the human beings, the path they should follow to gain true success in this life and the hereafter and the path which will lead them to ruin and destruction. Imam Shafi has very rightly pointed out that if the people pay attention to the message contained in this Surah and follow it, it alone would be enough guidance for their lifetime. The importance and impact of this Surah on the lives of the Companions can be judged from a tradition followed by the companions in those days, according to which whenever any two Companions met they would not part company until they had recited Surah Al-Asr to each other. (Tabarani).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

وَالْعَصْرِ ①

By the Time

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إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾

Humanity is surely at a loss

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

﴿٣﴾

Except those who believed and did good deeds, and encouraged one another to Truth, and encouraged one another to patience.

In this Surah an oath has been sworn by the Time (In the name of Time) to impress the point that humanity is going down the path of sheer loss and only those people are an exception from this loss who practice the following four qualities:

- (1) Have Faith, in Allah (SWT).
- (2) Do righteous deeds,
- (3) Encourage one another to Truth, and
- (4) Encourage one another to Patience.

Let us consider each of these parts separately in order to understand the meaning fully.

The word **time** is used to impress humanity and to bring to it's attention that time waits for none. The passing of every moment, every second of ones life, signifies that he or she is losing their chance to be on the right path and avoid loss and destruction. Therefore, the oath by Time signifies that Time is witness to the truth that humanity is in sheer loss except for those people who possess the above mentioned four qualities.

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In some translations the word Insaan is translated to MAN. Word Man has been used as a collective noun, denoting a class, and it applies equally to individuals, groups, nations, and entire mankind and hence the whole humanity.

Now, in what sense has the Qur'an used the word **khusr** (loss). The word Khusr or loss does not refer to the material losses sustained only in this world but one's true loss in this world and the Hereafter. Thus, when the Qur'an states conclusively and absolutely that Man is certainly in loss, it implies loss both in this world and in the Hereafter; and when it says that only such people are secure from this loss, who are characterised by the four qualities, it implies their being secure from loss and attaining true success both here and in the Hereafter.

Now, let us consider the four qualities on which man's loss and failure in the hereafter depends..

Of these the first quality is Iman (Faith). Although this word at some places in the Qur'an has been used to denote verbal affirmation of Faith it has primarily been used here to denote believing sincerely and faithfully. The Faith which the Qur'an regards as true Faith has been explained in the following verses:

"In fact, true believers are those who believed in Allah and His Messenger, then entertained no doubt." (Al-Hujurat: 15)

"Those who said: 'Allah is our Lord', and then stood steadfast by it." (Ha Mim As-Sajdah : 30)

"True believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe, whenever Allah is mentioned to them. (Al-Anfal : 2).

"Those who have believed adore Allah most ardently." (Al-Baqarah 165)

"Nay, (O Prophet), by your Lord, they can never become believers until they accept you as judge for the decision of the disputes between them, and then surrender to your decision with entire submission without the least resentment in their hearts." (An-Nisa': 65).

The following verse is even more explicit as regards the distinction between verbal affirmation of Faith and true Faith; it says that what is actually desirable is true Faith and not mere verbal affirmation of the Faith:

"O you who profess to have believed, believe sincerely in Allah and His Messenger." (An-Nisa': 136)

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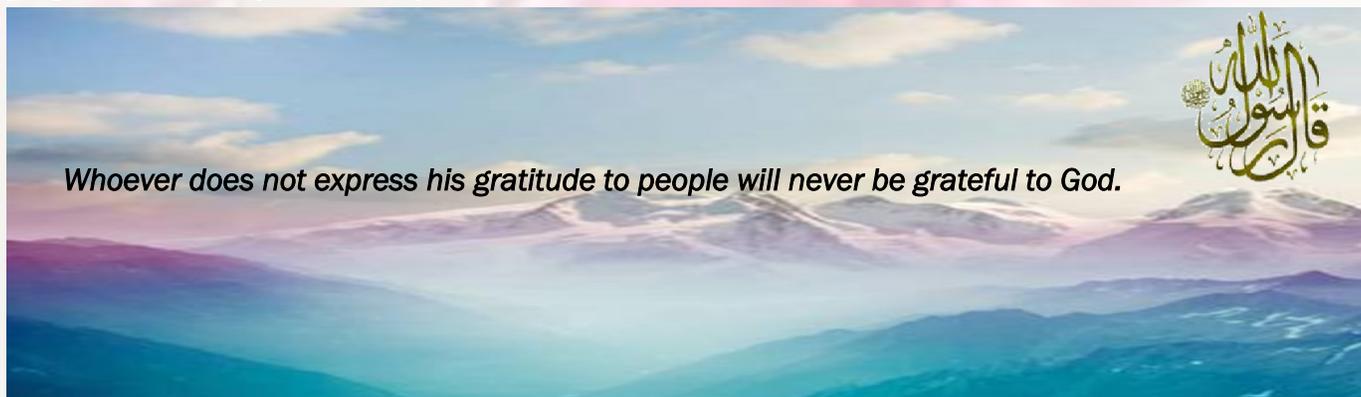
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This Faith provides a firm basis for morality and character, upon which can be built the edifice of a pure life, whereas the truth is that without such Faith, the life of man, however beautiful and pleasing outwardly, is like a ship without an anchor, which is at the mercy of the waves wherever they may take it.

After Faith the second quality required to save man from loss is to perform righteous deeds (**Salihalt**). Salihat comprehends all kinds of virtuous and good deeds. However, according to the Qur'an, no act can be a good act unless it is based on Faith and it is performed in obedience to the guidance given by Allah SWT and His Messenger PBUH. That is why in the Qur'an exhortation to perform good deeds is preceded everywhere by Faith, and in this Surah too it has been mentioned after the Faith. Nowhere in the Qur'an has a deed without Faith been called a good deed, nor any reward promised for a deed performed without Faith. What man requires to do after the Faith in order to remain secure from loss is to perform righteous deeds. In other words, mere Faith without righteous deeds cannot save man from loss.

The above two qualities are such as must be possessed by every single individual. Then, the Surah mentions two further qualities, which a man must have in order to be saved from loss. They are that the people who believe and do good deeds must exhort one another to truth and to patience. This means that in the first place, believing and righteous people should not live as individuals but should create a believing and righteous society by their combination. Second, that every individual of this society must feel his or her responsibility not to let the society become degenerate. Thus, all its members are duty bound to exhort one another to truth and to patience.

Besides exhorting to the truth, the other thing which has been declared as a necessary condition for keeping the believers and their society secure from loss is that the members of the society should enjoin **patience** upon one another. That is, they should enjoin upon one another to bear with fortitude and steadfastness the difficulties, hardships, trials, losses and deprivations which befall the one who adheres to the truth and supports it. Each one of them should encourage the other to bear up against adversity steadfastly.



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Measures When Infected by a Virus

Likewise Islam teaches us remedies that can help fight off any illness or virus, including:

1. **Medical Treatment.** The Prophet would encourage his followers to seek medical treatment and told them to use water while dealing with fever; **"God's Messenger used to order us to abate fever with water."**[13] He even used to have cupping therapy applied on himself.[14]
2. **Seeking a Cure.** It is up to us to strive and find a cure for all illnesses; for the Prophet mentioned, **"There is no disease that God has created, except that He also has created its treatment,"**[15] and **"God has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful."**[16] Also as narrated by Usamah ibn Sharik: **"I came to the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, and his Companions were sitting as if they had birds on their heads [figuratively speaking, due to how attentive they were]. I saluted and sat down. The desert Arabs then came from here and there. They asked, 'Messenger of God, should we make use of medical treatment?' He replied, 'Make use of medical treatment, for God has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age.'"**[17]
3. **Giving Charity.** This might come as a surprise, however, at times of dire need one should turn to God with acts that please Him; and giving to the poor and needy for the sake of seeking God's pleasure is an act that pleases the Lord and brings one closer to His Mercy.
4. **Dependence on God.** After taking all necessary medical treatment one should be dependent on God with their heart. A believer knows that God is the Creator of everything big and small, and although He has given a reason for everything, in the end He is in control of everything. The Quran (65:3) mentions that, **"... whoever, relies on God – then He is sufficient for him."** A fine example is our father Abraham who when he would fall ill would seek suitable medical treatment then confidently tell his people, **"And when I am ill, it is He (God) Who cures me."** (Quran 26:80).
5. **Remaining Positive.** Staying calm and positive and thinking that, God willing, one will get through their illness is of extreme importance; in fact it is part of the psychological

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treatment that helps one's immune system do its work in the correct fashion. Feeling negative and pessimistic on the contrary weakens one's immune system. The Prophet said, **"There is ... no 'tiyarah' (superstitious beliefs in omens), but I like good mention."** They said: **"What is a good mention?" He said: "An optimistic word."**[18] So a patient should remain positive and, for example, say, "I hope to be better by the weekend and back to work soon."

6. **The Secret Weapon: Prayer.** This is an extremely effective weapon to fight off any illness. The Quran (40:60) mentions, **"And your Lord said, "Call upon Me (God); I will respond to you..."** A well-known hadith narrated by 'Aisha states: **"Whenever God's Messenger paid a visit to a patient, or a patient was brought to him, he used to invoke God, saying, 'Take away the disease, O the Lord of the people! Cure him as You are the One Who cures. There is no cure but Yours, a cure that leaves no disease.'"**[19] God likes it when His servants turn to Him in prayer at time of calamity and weakness and are not arrogant to raise their hands in the air and ask Him to bestow His Mercy and cure them. God's promise is true, and He answers the calls of whoever calls Him. Finally the dear Prophet told us that, "nothing averts the Divine Decree except for supplication,"[20] meaning that if something bad was going to occur and someone asked God for protection from all harm and God answered his/her prayer then that bad thing will not occur; likewise, if someone is sick and asks God to be cured, God willing, they will be cured.

Eventually, this global pandemic will subside – as do all hardships in this world – and life will start returning to normal again. Let the first thing we do after COVID-19 has been defeated is be thankful to God for allowing it to subside. Then let us all relook at our relationship with our Lord and ask ourselves how we can get closer to Him. **"O God, I seek refuge in You from the withdrawal of Your blessing and the decline of the good health you have given..."**[21] God bless and protect you all.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 541

[2]Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 502

[3]Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 432

[4]Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 502

[5]Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 534

[6]Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 532

[7]Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 528

[8]Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 553

[9]Al Bukhari, Book # 65, Hadith # 304

[10]Abu Dawoud, Book # 41, Hadith # 1.

[11]Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 624

[12]Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 626

[13]Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 620

[14]Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 595

[15]Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 582

[16]Abu Dawoud, Book # 28, Hadith # 3865

[17]Abu Dawoud, Book # 28, Hadith # 3846

[18]Muslim, Book # 26, Hadith # 5520

[19]Al Bukhari, Book # 70, Hadith # 579

[20]Ibn Majah, Book # 1, Hadith # 90



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