

Core Curriculum

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3 Foundations of Islam - Obligatory Acts

3.1

Accepting Islam: Putting Faith into Action

Question : Can I be punished in the after life if I don't perform my religious obligations?

Answer : Yes

Question : What is one of the prime distinguishers between someone who is a real Muslim and someone who is not?

Answer : Putting belief into action.

Question : Can I still be a Muslim if I don't believe in religious obligations?

Answer : No

Question : What is Islam?

Answer : Islam is a verb, and action; it means submission.

Question : Is belief enough for salvation in Islam?

Answer : Belief must always translate into action. Without action, a person has no Islam.

3.2

Jihād in Islamic Law and Spirituality

Question : What is the best way to struggle against my evil nafs?

Answer : Develop the habit of saying "no" to it.

Question : What is al-Nafs al-Ammārah?

Answer : It is the self or ego which commands us to do evil. It is what Muslims must struggle against.

Question : What is Jihad al-Asghar?

Answer : It is the minor Jihad, it is defending oneself or one's community against warring aggressors.

Question : What is Jihad al-Akbar?

Answer : It is the greater Jihad, it is the jihad against one's evil desires.

Question : What is Jihad?

Answer : Jihad is struggle against evil

3.3

Salāt: Obligatory Ritual Prayers in Islam

Question : What is the difference between du‘ā and the five daily salāt?

Answer : Du‘ā is a supplication and not obligatory on its own, salāt is a ritual prayer and is obligatory.

Question : How many daily obligatory prayers/salāt do we have?

Answer : Five

Question : Is salāt performed at the same time every day?

Answer : Not exactly, the daily prayers follow the movement of the sun.

Question : Can I be a Muslim and not pray?

Answer : If you dismiss it entirely, no you cannot.

Question : Is it ok that I perform salāt on my own time if I’m too busy?

Answer : No, you must pray on God’s time. The various times can be found in Muslim prayer calendars.

3.4

Ritual Purity in Islamic Law: Understanding Tahāra and Najāsa

Question : What is tahāra?

Answer : Tahara is ritual purity. Tahāra is necessary for ritual practices like prayer.

Question : What is najāsa?

Answer : Najasa is ritual impurity. Excrement, blood or semen are considered najis or ritually impure in Islam.

Question : What is tayammum?

Answer : Tayammum is a form of ritual purification with the same effects of ghusl. It is performed when one does not, for example, have water.

Question : If I perform ghusl, do I have to perform wudū as well?

Answer : Generally no. There are cases which it may be needed, but this is subject to disagreement among Muslim scholars.

Question : Does najāsa or janāba mean dirty?

Answer : No, it means ritual impurity. Something may be ritually impure, but be considered clean in the conventional sense. The same applies to tahāra.

3.5

The Five Categories of Islamic Law

Question : What is the difference between wajib and fard?

Answer : Fard is a subcategory of wajib, it is a Quranic obligation, i.e. an obligation explicitly found in the Quran.

Question : What is mustahab?

Answer : Mustahab is a recommended act in Islam which one gains a lot of reward for doing, but no sin for not doing it.

Question : What is Makruh?

Answer : Makruh is a hated act in Islam, but one gains no sin in doing it, but gains rewards from God for desisting from it.

Question : Can something mubah become wajib?

Answer : Yes, regularly drinking water is mubāh. However, if regularly drinking water means saving your life because of some condition you have, mubāh becomes wājib.

Question : How many categories of law do we have in Islamic practice?

Answer : Five. They are wājib, mustahab, mubāh, makrūh and haram.

3.6

Tawalla and Tabarra, its Basics and Purpose

Question : What is Tawalla?

Answer : Love for the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Question : What is Tabarra?

Answer : Disassociating from the enemies of the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt (as)

Question : What is wrong with associating with the enemies of the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt (as)?

Answer : It is not pleasing to Allah, and associating oneself with bad people will have a negative influence on us. The Prophet (s) said: "a person follows the religion of his friends." If one has enough learning in Islam, one may try to change them, but one cannot befriend them.

Question : What role does Tabarra play in the world?

Answer : It forces us to speak out against evil in this world and not be complacent to it.

Question : What's the connection between tawalla and tabarra and amr bi al-ma'rūf and nahī 'an al-munkar?

Answer : Tawalla and tabarra are inner dispositions, they guide the actions of amr bi al-ma'rūf and nahī 'an al-munkar.

3.7

The Purpose of Zakat and Khums in Islamic Law

Question : What is Khums?

Answer : Khums is the 1/5th tax one must pay on one's final sitting income after one's total expenses.

Question : What is Zakat?

Answer : Zakat is a 2.5% tax one pays from one's tangible income (like gold and silver) and it is generally meant to help the poor

Question : What is khums money usually used for?

Answer : Khums is usually used to fund Muslim organizations and institutions like Mosques, religious programs or seminaries.

Question : Who do I pay khums to?

Answer : A Muslim center that has been approved for khums collection by a Marja'

Question : Can I pay zakat in dollars?

Answer : No

3.8

The Hajj Pilgrimage

Question : What is the Ka'ba?

Answer : Cube shaped building which is the direction for Muslim prayers. It is also the building around which Muslims circumambulate during the Hajj pilgrimage.

Question : Did the Hajj rituals begin with the Prophet Muhammad? (s)

Answer : No, they began with the Prophet Abraham (as).

Question : How many times do Muslims have to walk around the Ka'ba for?

Answer : Seven

Question : What is the tawāf?

Answer : Circumambulation around the Ka'ba seven times in counter-clock wise fashion.

Question : What is the Hajj?

Answer : Pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims must perform at least once in their lifetime.

3.9

The Furū' al-Dīn: The Fundamental Practices of Islam

Question : What is the furū al-dīn?

Answer : The most fundamental core practices of Islam

Question : Telling the truth is not part of the 10 furū' al-dīn, does this mean it's not important?

Answer : Telling the truth is part of the 7th furū' al-dīn, i.e. commanding the good. The furū' al-dīn

are umbrella practices, they are general points that cover most Islamic practices.

Question : What's the difference between *usūl al-dīn* and *furū' al-dīn*?

Answer : The former are the fundamental core beliefs of Islam, the latter are its fundamental core practices.

Question : If I don't believe in practicing the *furū' al-dīn*, can I still be a Muslim?

Answer : If you do so knowing that Islam makes it obligatory, then no, you cannot be considered a Muslim.

Question : Are the *furū' al-dīn* obligatory or recommended?

Answer : Obligatory.

3.10

Fasting in Islam, its Purpose, Dos and Don'ts

Question : Is fasting during the month of Ramadan obligatory?

Answer : It is obligatory for all eligible Muslims.

Question : Can I choose which month I want to fast for the 30-day obligatory fast instead of the month of Ramadan?

Answer : No, it must be during the month of Ramadan.

Question : Can I fast half of the month of Ramadan, take a break and fast some other time during the year?

Answer : You cannot do that without a valid reason.

Question : What is the purpose of fasting during the month of Ramadan?

Answer : It is to produce God consciousness by helping your mind and will detach itself from your daily desires that are often compulsive.

Question : Can I fast if I am sick?

Answer : As long as it does not pose a health danger

3.11

Other Obligatory and Forbidden Acts in Islam

Question : If an Islamic obligation or prohibition is not part of the *furū' al-dīn*, does it mean it is less important?

Answer : Not necessarily. The *furū' al-dīn* are the basic platform of Islamic law. Other things are its details. They can be just as important.

Question : How many laws and commandments are there in Islam?

Answer : Perhaps infinite! As many situations and conditions humans have, there are Islamic rulings pertinent to them!

Question : If I stay single but don't sin, or am not tempted to sin, is marriage still obligatory?

Answer : No, but it is still highly recommended.

Question : Can I yell at my parents if I'm angry?

Answer : No, Islam forbids disrespect to one's parents.

Question : Can I force my wife to get a job and pay the bills in Islam?

Answer : No, you are not allowed. Only the husband is obligated to work and provide for his family

3.12

Niyya: Religious Intention as the Foundation of Islamic Practice

Question : What is niyya?

Answer : Niyya is the proper intention of reaching closeness to God that one must make before most religious practices are undertaken.

Question : What is good niyya?

Answer : Good niyya is qurbatan ila-Allāh, wanting to reach closeness to God and nothing else.

Question : What is bad niyya?

Answer : Performing a religious action or duty for the sake of something or someone other than Allah.

Question : Is niyya outward or supposed to be from the heart?

Answer : Heart

Question : What is one way of learning how to have good niyya?

Answer : Gaining Islamic knowledge, learning what is truly right and truly wrong in Islam.

3.13

Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil in Islam

Question : What is Commanding the Good?

Answer : It is encouraging in ourselves and others what Allah has deemed as good in Islam, like prayer or fasting.

Question : What is Forbidding Evil?

Answer : It is discouraging ourselves and others from committing what Allah has deemed as evil, like lying or gossiping.

Question : Is Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil obligatory?

Answer : Yes, as long as there is a possibility of an effect. There are some cases where it is obligatory in any case, please refer to your Marja'.

Question : If I see someone not praying, and I know me telling them to do it won't do any good, do I still have to Command what is Good?

Answer : If you are certain he or she won't change, it is not obligatory to do it in most cases.

Question : What is the difference between Jihad and Commanding the Good & Forbidding Evil?

Answer : The latter is the direction, the former is the effort or struggle.