

Core Curriculum

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6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

6.1

The Effects of Our Actions in this World

Question : What is one way of defining sin?

Answer : It is choosing a pleasure over friendship with God

Question : How does sin affect one's children?

Answer : Our children imitate and inherit the way we act. Sinful behavior is often inherited from parents.

Question : How does sin affect society?

Answer : People directly or indirectly copy what we do, just like people imitate famous stars.

Question : What is primary effect of sin?

Answer : It distances a person from God.

Question : What is the effect of distance from God?

Answer : Our souls become disturbed and more vulnerable to Shaytān.

6.2

The Gray Areas of Islamic Law and Morality

Question : Are halal and haram moral categories?

Answer : Yes, they can be moral categories in two ways, in our relationship with others and in our relationship with God. Disobeying God while not directly harming others is still immoral.

Question : What is a gray area in Islamic law?

Answer : It is an area where it isn't clear cut whether an action is morally good or bad, but in the law, it may be a point where we're not sure about, or be something that is reprehensible but permissible (makrūh)

Question : Can you name an example of a makrūh act which God dislikes but allows anyways?

Answer : Divorce

Question : If there is a gray area in Islam, should we approach it or leave it?

Answer : The Prophet (s) taught us to leave it as it risks leading us into sin

Question : How does something mubāh become mustahab?

Answer : By changing one's intention in wanting to please God.

6.3

Heaven and Hell in Islam

Question : Why does the Qur'an mention Heaven so much?

Answer : To encourage people to be good, patient and know that they will be rewarded infinitely more than what they sacrificed in this world.

Question : Why does the Qur'an mention Hell so much?

Answer : So that people would be warned and refrain from sinning

Question : Is the hellfire real?

Answer : Yes, but it is not the same kind of fire as in this world.

Question : Is the description of heaven imagery, or really real?

Answer : Like hell, the description of heaven is real and not metaphorical.

Question : Is hell forever?

Answer : Only for those who truly do not want to repent

6.4

Life and Death in Islam

Question : What is the meaning of life in Islam?

Answer : Life is a test for the Hereafter

Question : What is the meaning of death in Islam?

Answer : Death means the end of the test in this world, and beginning of eternal life in the Hereafter

Question : What is the purpose of human life in this world?

Answer : It is to establish a good relationship and friendship with God.

Question : Is belief in God and performing rituals enough in order to pass the test of this life?

Answer : No, one must also lead a proper moral life?

Question : What are the consequences of not believing in life after death?

Answer : It leads to nihilism where nothing has ultimate objective purpose or meaning. The absence of ultimate meaning and purpose is the strict definition of nihilism.

6.5

Guidance According to Islam

Question : What is Sirāt al-Mustaqīm?

Answer : It is the Straight Path to God

Question : What is guidance?

Answer : Guidance is closeness to, and intimacy with God

Question : How can the moral life be summarized?

Answer : Being good to people, even when it goes against a person's selfish interests

Question : Who decides what is right and what is wrong?

Answer : Allah

6.6

Fate and the Consequences of our Choices in Islam

Question : Do we have karma in Islam?

Answer : If you mean karma in the sense that God makes us see the consequences of our actions in this world, then yes.

Question : Does Islam believe in free will?

Answer : Yes

Question : Does the environment affect our the range of our free choices in this world according to Islam?

Answer : Yes

Question : If our free will and range of choices are limited, as Islam teaches, how can we increase them?

Answer : Through prayer and repentance. By growing closer to God, we unshackle ourselves from the cultural dictates that unconsciously shape so many of our choices.

Question : Who does our actions and deeds impact the most?

Answer : Our own souls

6.7

The Effect of Culture and Environment in Shaping our Religious Choices

Question : According to Islam, does the environment affect our choices?

Answer : Yes, these include our parents, friends and culture we were raised in

Question : What are some of the environmental factors that influence our choices?

Answer : Among many other things: our culture, language, economic circumstances, parents, friends, opportunities we had in life etc.

Question : Does Allah punish us for things which are out of our control?

Answer : No

Question : Does Allah judge everyone the same way even if they were raised in different environments?

Answer : No, Allah is Just, He judges everyone according to the circumstances they were brought up in.

Question : If many of us are victims of our circumstances, what will Allah judge us upon?

Answer : He will look at our awareness and knowledge of truth and in accordance with that, judge us based on our sincerity and effort to strive towards that truth.

6.8

Major Sins in Islam

Question : Is shirk believing in more than one god?

Answer : Not necessarily, it is to take something or someone as an object of worship, to the exclusion of, or in addition to God Himself.

Question : What is a major sin?

Answer : A sin that leads to direct damnation in the Hereafter

Question : Why is disobeying parents so bad?

Answer : It is a sign of ungratefulness to those who gave life and nurtured us. Our relationship with our parents is a testing grounds for our obedience and gratefulness to Allah.

Question : Why does the Qur'an mean when it says murdering one person is like murdering all of humanity?

Answer : Human beings are all interconnected, we live in societies and in families, murdering one person affects all those around him or her.

Question : What is worship in Islam?

Answer : To take something as the greatest point of devotion and love

6.9

Why Allah Allows People to Sin

Question : Why doesn't God stop us from sinning?

Answer : Because He would have to take away our free will, which is from where we do good.

Question : What is free will?

Answer : It is the power to take action, or make choices, without constraint or fate.

Question : Why does God test us by allowing us to sin?

Answer : By testing us, Allah gives us an opportunity to learn and grow spiritually.

6.10

Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins in Islam

Question : What is full and complete repentance?

Answer : It is to cease that particular sin and turn towards Allah in regret for one's actions

Question : What does tawbah literally mean?

Answer : It means to turn back to Allah

Question : Is it enough to just say "God forgive me" after one sins?

Answer : It is a good start, but it must be followed with the cessation of that sin

Question : Does Allah forgive all sins?

Answer : With repentance, He forgives all sins

Question : Can people who are in hell be forgiven?

Answer : Yes, through true and sincere repentance

6.11

The Three Kinds of Rights in Islam

Question : What are the three kinds of rights in Islam?

Answer : The rights of the self, the rights of others and the rights of God

Question : What are the right of the self?

Answer : To dignify and respect oneself, both bodily and in what we spend our time in.

Question : What are the rights of others?

Answer : It is to dignify and respect others, both in their absence and in their presence, in ease as well as in hardship.

Question : What are the rights of God?

Answer : It is to dignify God by not associating any partners with Him in this world.

Question : What is shirk?

Answer : It is believing that others have powers to do things independent of God.

6.12

Sinning Against Others and their Delayed Punishment

Question : Why does God delay punishment?

Answer : Delay of punishment is meant for the worst of people, as punishment in the next life is worse than the one in this world.

Question : What is delay in punishment?

Answer : It is a delay in full punishment, but people see the punishment partially in this world.

Question : Why are sins like backbiting or lying so bad?

Answer : They erode the trust in the Muslim community, and the community is essential for

salvation as it is the spiritual cradle of people.

6.13

Kufr in Islam

Question : If someone is a kafir, does it mean they don't believe in God's existence?

Answer : According to the Qur'an, a being can believe in God's existence but still be a kafir because a kafir is someone who opposes the truth even though he or she may acknowledge its truthfulness.

Question : Does the Qur'an ever call the Devil a Kafir?

Answer : Yes, in Q2:34

Question : How is the Devil a Kafir in the Qur'an?

Answer : By rejecting God's commands

Question : Where does Kufr come from?

Answer : Arrogance, that is, thinking you are above the God's commands.

Question : Since Iblis or the Devil is a Kafir, is possible that he stopped believing in God's existence?

Answer : No, he fully experienced God before his fall. He is 100% certain that God exists.

6.14

Trivializing the Harām

Question : What does it mean to trivialize the harām?

Answer : It is to believe that either God doesn't really care if we commit sins, or believe that He will forgive no matter what.

Question : Can we be sure that God will forgive us of our sins on the Day of Judgment?

Answer : Never

Question : What is an example of an act that our cultures may consider ok but is haram in Islam?

Answer : Backbiting

Question : When we do something harām, who do we harm the most?

Answer : Our souls

Question : If God forgives us for our sins, do we still lose something?

Answer : Yes, the chance to grow spiritually. Obedience to God would naturally take us forward.

6.15

Benefits of Islamic Law in this World

Question : Can we abstain from making a choice in religion?

Answer : Abstaining is itself a form of choice

Question : Does Islamic law only benefit us in the Hereafter?

Answer : No, it also benefits us in this world

Question : What are some of the benefits of Islamic law in this world?

Answer : Our mental wellbeing, family cohesion and giving us discipline

Question : What is the purpose of Islamic law?

Answer : It is to discipline our lives and make sure that all we do is in accordance with God's will.

Question : Who are the best sources for Islamic law?

Answer : Our Marjas, that is, experts in Islamic law

6.16

Good and Bad Deeds: The Spiritual Consequences of our Choices

Question : Does Islam believe in free will?

Answer : Yes

Question : If we don't choose right or wrong, does this mean we didn't make a choice?

Answer : That's impossible, not choosing is itself a choice. Not choosing good means giving way to evil.

Question : What is redemptive suffering?

Answer : It is the kind of suffering that helps us grow spiritually by making us return to God by asking for His help.

Question : What is a pure heart?

Answer : A heart that only has Allah in it

Question : Why doesn't Allah give us a good life all the time?

Answer : Because it is through suffering that we learn the most