

Core Curriculum

3 Foundations of Islam - Obligatory Acts

3.13 **Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil in Islam**

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel!

The 7th and 8th items of the Furū‘ al-Dīn are called Commanding the Good (Amr bi al-Ma‘rūf) and Forbidding Evil (Nahī ‘an al-Munkar).

Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil are important social duties in Islam. In this lesson, we will look at the important role these two principles play in the world of Islam.

BODY OF TEXT

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient. (Chapter 3, verse 110 of the Holy Qur’an)

The fifth Imām, Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir (as) once said, “Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil are the most important obligations [of Islam] because upon them depends the performance of all other obligations. If Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil are done, the earth will become a safe place, enemies will be defeated, and all other matters will be done appropriately.”

Anarchy comes in two major forms. First there is political anarchy where no rules and punishments are enforced. Humans are free to do what they want. Unfortunately, many bad people take advantage of this and turn people's lives into a chaotic hell!

Another form of anarchy is something called moral anarchy. Although there may be political authority and severe crimes like murder may be punished, in moral anarchy many moral codes that are inspired by religious values will be disregarded and ignored. In moral anarchy, you will see sins like adultery, fornication and drinking legalized.

The purpose of al-Amr bi al-Ma'rūf and Nahī 'an al-Munkar is to address these problems. These principles teach us to encourage people to pray and to teach people that sins like fornication are immoral and evil.

Through the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), God has taught us what is good and what is bad. First we need to apply them to ourselves. Second, we need to apply them to others by educating them and encouraging them to do good and discouraging them from doing evil.

If you see someone not praying, try encouraging them to pray. If you see someone lying, try teaching them that lying is bad.

If the Ummah is healthy, we ourselves have a better chance at finding salvation. Think about it this way, will you or your kids be able to lead a healthy spiritual life in a sinful environment? It's very hard to do so!

Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil comes with conditions in Islamic law:

We must be aware of the good and bad in Islam. So before doing anything, we need to make sure that we are aware of the basic moral and legal dos and don'ts of Islam. If you are unsure, ask a scholar or email your Marja'.

We must believe that there is a possibility that we can enact change. If we are certain that nothing will happen, then it is no longer obligatory to Command the Good and Forbid Evil.

The person Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil must be sure that no harm will come to him or her, whether it is personal, bodily or financial.

If the problem, however, is so big (like mass murder and oppression) then the condition of possibility of change or self harm are no longer conditions, we must Forbid Evil regardless of consequences. Remember that evil is allowed to rise and take over a nation when good men and women don't do anything.

Method of Commanding the Good and Forbidding Evil

Talk to a person politely and gently ask them to perform a deed or abstain from an evil.

Being a good example (sometimes talking doesn't work!)

One may report the matter to a scholar, or someone who is wiser and more knowledgeable who can better deal with issues, particularly with social evils.

If an urgent matter comes across that requires immediate action, like seeing someone assaulted on the streets, then one must put a stop to it.

Now this is really important to remember and pay attention to. All of these above actions will only be considered Amr bi al-Ma'rūf and Nahī 'an al-Munkar if and only if you do it for the sake of Allah.

Remember that when practicing Amr bi al-Ma'rūf and Nahī 'an al-Munkar, one is primarily doing this among Muslims. In many cases, we live in the West where people follow other religions. In this circumstance, a Muslim has no duty in forbidding something that another person's religion allows.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu 'Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh