

## Core Curriculum

### 6 Measuring Good and Bad in Islam

#### 6.16 **Good and Bad Deeds: The Spiritual Consequences of our Choices**

##### 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 greatest and most distinguishing feature of a human being is that of choice. From the day we are born, until the day we die, our lives are all made up of choices, either by ourselves or by other people. Without choice, our entire social order would cease to exist.

Often times, we don't make the right choices. This is for various reasons. Sometimes doing the right thing means going against our interests, or because our carnal desires want something else. At other times, it is simply because of ignorance, we just don't know any better. Regardless of what it is, Allah is our Lord and our Nurturer.

His primary interest in us is not to make us happy, but to make us grow in spirit and in wisdom and thus purify our hearts. Allah uses various ways to encourage us to reach this lofty goal.

In this lesson, we will briefly look over the question of choice in Islam. Secondly and lastly, we look at how suffering in this world is a means to push us in making better choices.

## BODY OF TEXT

Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided. (Chapter 28, verse 56 of the Holy Qur'an)

It is often thought that a person can refrain from making choices. Perhaps nowhere is this more common than with the question of right and wrong, or religion itself. Being irreligious is a choice in itself.

Similarly, by not choosing right and wrong, one does make a choice and that choice is not only acquiescing to what is wrong, but it is also choosing to live a life of heedlessness. Heedlessness is a life of indifference and negligence towards one's duties with Allah.

Avoiding choice is thus impossible unless one is dead, unconscious or afflicted with some serious condition that robs us of a normal life. Choice is an essential part of being a human being.

All of our choices play a direct role in shaping our hearts. By hearts we mean our souls. If everything in life is centered on choice, then everything affects our hearts. They can either purify our hearts, or corrupt them.

How is the soul or heart purified and how is it corrupted? A pure heart is a heart that has nothing in it except for God. It is a heart that is focused on pleasing God and doing good for humankind.

It is a heart that is devoid of spiritual vices like arrogance. One of the major features of arrogance is thinking we are better and know more than others, which sometimes includes thinking we know better than Allah Himself.

It is quite self-evident where this kind of arrogance may lead to. We commit crimes and hurt others in various ways since we think they are not worthy of respect or that they are inferior to us.

Similarly, we sin against Allah as we sometimes implicitly think that we know more than Him even though we care not to admit it.

But Allah wants to purify our hearts. He wants to get rid of all thoughts but Him. He wants to take out evil and put only good in our souls. He wants us to stop being arrogant and become humble servants of Him. He wants us to be doers of good in this world.

Sometimes living the easy life is good in this world, but it can be the most terrible thing that can befall the human soul. For many people, comfort and ease may lead us to a life of carelessness.

Why improve oneself? Why reexamine one's life when everything is going smoothly? People often turn to God in hardships, but at times of ease, they forget Him.

As we are creatures with free will, and free will is the only way to attain good (for how can you be good if your actions are not of your own?), Allah will not force us to make choices. What He will do, however, is to put us in circumstances that will make us more likely to turn back to Him.

For example, people turn to God when they fall very ill, or when some large tragedy is about to happen. They see that nothing in the world can save them except for the All Mighty Creator of the universe!

By turning back to God we often realize the ugly nature of our bad deeds and bad choices. It offers us the opportunity to reform ourselves to become better people and better servants of Allah.

The Qur'an says:

"If God helps you, none can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there after Him that can help you? And in God (Alone) let believers put their trust." (Chapter 3, verse 160 of the Holy Qur'an)

In order to make us mindful of sins and encourage a state of mind in us

that would lead us to salvation in the Hereafter, Allah sometimes afflicts us with difficulty in this world so that we may “snap out” of our slumber and heedlessness and thus turn back to Him.

The Qur’an says:

“And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones.”  
(Chapter 2, verse 155 of the Holy Qur’an)

This only happens under one condition and that’s having sufficient awareness. Sometimes we are so blinded by pride that we don’t see our weaknesses and failures. We don’t see that the only way to tranquility and peace is in God.

In this way, suffering has little effect. But for many other people, suffering opens them up to compassion. It opens them to the reality that they are indeed helpless and that only God can help them. This is where we find something called “redemptive suffering.,” that is, suffering that helps us grow spiritually.

And I leave you with the following verse of the Holy Qur’an:

Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people." (Chapter 2, verse 286 of the Holy Qur’an)

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