

# To be forgiving of mistakes

One of the most important signs of Islamic virtue is to be forgiving and merciful. In the Qur'an, Allah calls His faithful servants to be "forgiving":

**Practice forgiveness, command what is right, and turn away from the ignorant. (Surat al-A'raf: 199)**



This is an attitude that the lower self finds hard to assume, but which deserves great rewards in the sight of Allah.

An individual may be unwilling to forgive a mistake or may feel angry about it. However, Allah makes it clear that forgiveness is the better path to take and encourages believers to practise this elevated form of morality:

**The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. But if someone pardons and puts things right, his reward is with Allah. Certainly He does not love wrongdoers. (Surat ash-Shura: 40)**

In another verse, Allah draws attention to the fact that willingness to forgive is a praiseworthy attribute of a believer:

**But if someone is steadfast and forgives, that is the most resolute course to follow. (Surat ash-Shura: 43)**

**Let not those of you who possess affluence and ample wealth ever become remiss in helping (the erring ones among) their relatives and the very poor and those who have migrated in the way of Allah. They should rather pardon and overlook. Would you not love Allah to forgive you? Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat an-Nur: 22)**

In the above verse, Allah calls believers to reflect upon how they would like to be treated. Indeed, every one strives for Allah's forgiveness, mercy and grace. He wishes that other people would forgive him when he makes a mistake. By recalling this, Allah



wants people to treat others in the way they want to be treated by them. This is no doubt a major reason for believers to show mercy to one another.

Believers show mercy to other believers, no matter how serious their mistakes may be, although, their forgiveness is very different from the forgiveness of those who do not embrace Qur'anic morality.

Those who are distant from Qur'anic morality, may say that they have forgiven someone, but the rage and hate they feel deep in their hearts hardly lessens. Their attitude, often reproachful, gives hints of this rage. Indeed, they give vent to the rage and hate in their hearts whenever they have the opportunity.

Believers, on the other hand, sincerely forgive, which is conduct praised by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the words he said to one of his companions "You possess two qualities that Allah loves. These are clemency and tolerance." (Muslim) Aware that man is by nature a fallible being, they approach people with tolerance from the very outset. The verses in the Qur'an relative to repentance remind us that man is prone to mistakes, yet what really matters is his sincere efforts not to repeat a mistake once he realises he has done something wrong. One of the verses reads:

**Allah only accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and then quickly repent after doing it. Allah turns towards such people. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Surat an-Nisa': 17)**

As long as a believer displays such an attitude, which makes his sincerity explicit, believers treat him most compassionately and with forgiveness. They do not inwardly hold grudges for mistakes made by someone who repents, regrets and tries to make amends. When he is sincerely committed to never repeating his mistake, believers know that they cannot judge him adversely because of something he has done in the past and that the truly important thing is the recent morality he displays.

One distinctive quality of believers' forgiveness is their showing no hesitation to forgive, even in circumstances where they are completely right and the wrongdoer is utterly unjust, since Allah recommends this as a model example of morality:

**Those who give in times of both ease and hardship, those who control their rage and pardon other people-Allah loves the good-doers. (Surah Al 'Imran: 134)**

Considering this command of Allah, believers act humbly, thereby becoming role models for others to follow.

Another important personal quality stemming from the values of Qur'an is that, in

their minds, believers do not classify mistakes as minor or serious and hence do not develop a different understanding of forgiveness according to the nature of each mistake. It may well be that the person in question has caused great material loss or has done harm to one's health by a mistake he has made. However, aware that every incident takes place by the will of Allah and in conformance with destiny, a believer faces up to such an incident by putting his trust in Him. Therefore, he never harbours anger deep in his heart, nor does he allow it to be stirred up.



Again, out of ignorance, this person might have disobeyed Allah's commands and transgressed His limits. Yet, in this situation, it is only Allah Who can judge the individual concerned. Thus, judging a person or not forgiving him is an attitude which a believer is not responsible for. The rewards one receives in return for sincere repentance and regret are at the will of Allah. Indeed, in numerous verses, Allah informs believers that He can forgive any mistakes except for that of "ascribing partners to Allah" (shirk). Since believers can never know whether an act is of an idolatrous nature, they forgive by complying with Allah's commands and if there is a particular attitude recommended in the Qur'an which a believer must assume in the face of such a mistake, they do so.

At this point, we need to recall that for a believer, sincerity and doing good will serve as the main criteria for forgiveness. A believer identifies these qualities in a person by the wisdom and conscience he possesses. He would no doubt debar one, who had made wickedness a way of life, from taking advantage of believers' compassion and good values. In such a case, a believer knows that true compassion entails not only forgiveness but also exhortations to be sincere and honest and to go in fear of Allah, all of which expresses his compassion in a more appropriate way.

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