

*Methodology (Minhaaj) of Ahlus-Sunnah
wa-l-Jamaa'ah
Related to Beliefs (al-'Aqeedah) and Actions (al-'Amal)*
By the Noble Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih ibn Uthaimeen (*Rahima-hu'llah*)

Study Guide Lecture No. One

The importance of knowledge and the Status of the people of knowledge

Allah, the Most High, says:

*...Say: Are those who **know** equal to those who do not know? It is only men of understanding who will remember (take heed). [Az-Zumar 39:9]*

Allah, the Most High, says:

*It is only those who have **knowledge** among His slaves that fear Allah. Verily Allah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving. [Faatir 35:28]*

Allah, the Most High, says:

*Allah bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but He, and the angels, and those having **knowledge** (also give this witness)...[Al-Imraan 3:18].*

Allah, the Most High, says:

*And those whom they invoke instead of Him have no power of intercession except for those who bear witness to the truth **knowingly** (i.e. believed in the Oneness of Allah, and obeyed His Orders, and they know the facts about the Oneness of Allah). [Az-Zukhruf 43:86].*

The Prophet ﷺ said: *Seeking **knowledge** is an obligation upon every Muslim. [Ibn Maajah].*

The Prophet ﷺ said: *He who dies **knowing** that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah shall enter Al-Jannah (Paradise).*

The Prophet ﷺ used to supplicate: *O Allah I ask of You beneficial **knowledge**...*

He ﷺ also used to supplicate: *O Allah I seek refuge in You from **knowledge** which has no benefit, and from deeds which are not raise up to you and from a supplication which is not heard.*

The Sources of Islamic Knowledge

Primary Sources

Al-Qur'an (the Book of Allah)

As-Sunnah (the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad)

Secondary Sources

Al-Ijmaa' (Consensus of the Muslim Scholars)

Al-Qiyaas (Analogy or Comparison based upon the text of Qur'an and Sunnah)

Al-'Urf (Customs of the People)

'Amalu Ahlu-l-Madeenah (Practices of the People of Madeenah)

Questions:

1. Mention a proof of the importance of knowledge.
2. Discuss the status of the People of knowledge.
3. Mention some of the sources of Islamic Knowledge.

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Study Guide Lecture No. Two

Introduction

'Aqeedah

Linguistically, the word '*aqeedah* means: 'to knot, bind, fasten tightly, fortify, consolidate and cement.'

Technically, the word '*aqeedah* means, 'a firm, **unwavering belief** which is in no way open to doubt in the mind and heart of the one who holds this conviction.'

Therefore, the **Islamic 'Aqeedah (Creed)** refers to **a firm unwavering faith** (Imaan) **in** the following:

- 1) **Allah**, the Most High, and what is due to Him from *Tawheed* in one's belief and worship and obedience to Him,
- 2) His **Angels**,
- 3) His **Scriptures**,
- 4) His **Messengers**,
- 5) The **Last Day**,
- 6) The **Divine Decree** (Qadr), &
- 7) What is confirmed from the remaining matters of the Unseen and reports concerning the previous nations,

Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah

Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah are all those who are upon that which the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) and His Companions were upon.

They are named "**Ahl al-Sunnah**" due to their adherence to, and following of, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

They are named the "**Jamaa'ah**" because they are those who have gathered upon the **Truth** and have not divided into sects in the religion among themselves; they have gathered around the lawful rulers and have not revolted against them; and they have followed that which the *Salaf* (Early Generations) of this nation have unanimously agreed upon.

Since they alone, in exclusion to all others, are the *followers* of the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him), *following/adhering* to his path, they are also known as "**Ahl al-Ittiba**" (those who **follow** strictly).

They are in this world “The *Victorious* Group” [*at-Taa'ifah al-Mansoorah*] and in the hereafter “The *Saved* Sect” [*al-Firqah an-Naajiyyah*].

Questions

1. What is the linguistic meaning of ‘Aqeedah?
2. What is the technical meaning of ‘Aqeedah?
3. Name some of the important points of the Islamic ‘*Aqeedah* (Pillars of Imaan)?
4. Who are the *Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa’ah*, and why are they referred to by this name?
5. What are some of the other names which refer to the *Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa’ah*?
6. Mention three principles related to the *Methodology Employed by Ahlu-s-Sunnah in the Acquisition of Matters of ‘Aqeedah*.

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Study Guide

Lecture No. 3

1. *The Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah* are those whom Allah guided in the *issues* about which the people *differed*, especially from the Generation of the Prophet, and the Era of the Rightly Guided Khalifahs.
2. The division of the Ummah into seventy-three (73) sects, all except one would be in the Fire.
3. The *Saved Sect (al-Firqah an-Naajiyah)* which would not enter into the Fire include all those who would follow that which the Prophet and his Companions were upon.
4. The *Saved Sect* are the *Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah*. They are known as such due to (a) Sticking to the *Sunnah*, and (b) *Uniting* upon the Truth.

Verily, those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you (O Muhammad) have no concern in them in the least. Their affair is only with Allah, Who then will tell them what they used to do. [al-An'aam 6:159]

The Prophet said: *the Jews and the Christians will be divided into seventy-one or seventy-two religious sects and this nation will divide into seventy-three religious sects – all in Hell except one, and that one is on which I and my companions are upon today (Following the Qur'an and Sunnah).* [Abu Daawood, at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah]

Questions:

1. Mention three of the *Important Qualities and Characteristics of Ahlu-s-Sunnah*.
2. The Muslim Ummah would be divided into how many sects?
3. Why are the Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah called by this name?
4. Discuss briefly the biography of the author. [Name, date of death, works, etc.]
5. Mention some of the important writings of the author.

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Study Guide Lecture No. Four **Point One**

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah
In Matters Relating to

The Names (*Asmaa'*) of Allah and His Characteristics (*Sifaat*) with *Examples*.

1. Whatever is confirmed in the Qur'an and *Saheeh* (Authentic) Sunnah is the Truth, and its reality is as it appears to be literally.
2. Giving distorted interpretations (*Tahreef*) is forbidden.
3. The mistake of those who do *Tahreef*, is their wrong belief that if they affirm the text literally as they appear – they will be making *comparison* (*Tashbeeh/Tamtheel*) between Allah and His creatures.
4. Another reason for offering distorted interpretations (*Tahreef*) is to divide the Muslims.
5. Acceptance of whatever Allah has named Himself with (*Asmaa'*) or described Himself with (*Sifaat*) – either in the Qur'an or Sunnah – as Truth, and that its reality is its *apparent, literal* meaning.
6. The *Asmaa'* and *Sifaat* of Allah are ***Tawqeefiyyah*** (i.e. limited to what is confirmed in the text of Qur'an and Authentic Sunnah – without adding to it or subtracting from it).

Concerning the Names (*Asmaa'*) of Allah, we are required to:

- (One) Believe that each name (affirmed in the text) is actually a **Name** for Allah.
(Two) Believe in that **Characteristic** or quality (*Sifah*) indicated in the Name.
(Three) Believe in the **Effect** (*Athar*) of that name, as it affects the creation.

This is concerning those names of Allah which are ***Muta'addee*** (which transcend Allah's Self and have an effect on His creatures).

Example: *as-Samee'* (the All-Hearing).

1. It is obligatory to affirm it as a name of Allah by which He is called upon and worshipped. Someone may be named *Abdus-Samee'* (the *Servant* of the All-Hearing); likewise, we supplicate Him by His name, saying: *Yaa Samee'* (O All-Hearing One!) [See: 7:180]

2. Similarly, we affirm for Him the *Sifah* (characteristic) *as-Sam'* (Hearing) which is derived from the name *as-Samee'*.

3. Additionally, we affirm the Effect (*Athar*) of this characteristic, which is the realization that Allah Hears everything.

As for those names of Allah which are ***Laazim*** (which do not transcend Allah's Self, and do not affect His creatures) – it is only required to:

- (a) Believe that each name (affirmed in the text) is actually a **Name** for Allah.
(b) Believe in that **Characteristic** or quality (*Sifah*) indicated in the Name.

Example: *al-Hayyu* (the Ever-Living).

1. We affirm it as a name of Allah by which we call upon Him and worship Him. Hence, someone might be named *Abdul-Hayy* (Servant of the Ever-Living); and we also supplicate Him, saying: *Yaa Hayyu Yaa Qayyoom!* (O Ever-Living, Self-Subsisting).
2. We also affirm for Him the *Sifah* (characteristic) of *al-Hayaah al-Kaamilah* (Perfect Life).

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Study Guide Lecture No. Five **Point One** (Cont'd)

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah
In Matters Relating to
The Names (*Asmaa'*) of Allah and His Characteristics (*Sifaat*) with *Examples*.

Concerning the Characteristics (*Sifaat*) of Allah:

-Whether characteristics mentioned simply as *Sifaat* without being named with the related Name [e.g. *Istiwaah* (ascension), *Nuzool* (descending), *Ghadab* (anger), *Ridaa* (pleasure)..]

-or those characteristics which are derived from His Names by which He is called upon [such as 'Uloo (Al-'Alee), 'Izzah (al-Azeez), 'Ilm (al-'Aleem)..]

We are required to:

(One) Believe in, and Affirm the *Sifah* as it is in reality – [without distortion, negation, etc.]

Example: Allah affirmed for Himself that He ascended (*al-Istiwaah*) above His 'Arsh. He affirmed this while speaking to us through the Qur'an, which is revealed in Clear Arabic Language.

Imaam Maalik's (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the saying of Allah: *Ar-Rahman (the Merciful One) Istawaa (ascended) 'Ala-l-'Arsh (above the Throne)*.
[Soorah TaHa 20:5]

He responded saying:

al-Istiwaah (ascending of Allah above the Throne) is *Ma'loom* (well known, in the Arabic language);

al-Kaif (the 'how of it') is *Maj-hool* (unknown, to the creatures);

as-Su'aal 'an-hu (asking about it's 'how') is *Bid'ah* (innovation); and

al-Emaan bi-hi (Faith in it) is *Wajib* (obligatory).

(Two) Avoid making comparisons (*tash-beeh*) or examples (*tam-theel*) for Allah with His creation.

(Three) Avoid imagining the how (*Kaifiyyah*) of Allah's characteristics.

(Four) Whoever tries to imagine the *How* of Allah's Self or His Characteristics, will fall into one of the following prohibited deviations: -- **Tahreef** (distortion) and **Ta'teel** (negation), or -- **Tamtheel** (examples) and **Tashbeeh** (comparisons).

Whoever imagines a characteristic of Allah to be in a specific manner – falls into *speaking without knowledge*. Allah says: *And follow not [do not say, do or witness] that of which you have no knowledge.*

Verily! The hearing, and the sight and the heart – of each of those you will be questioned (by Allah). [Al-Israa' 17:36]

Whoever imagines a characteristic of Allah to be similar to something existing, has fallen into making examples (or comparisons) for Allah. Allah says: *Nothing is like (similar or equal) to Him; and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.* [Ash-Shoorah 42:11]

Question:

1. What is the Ruling concerning distorted interpretations (*Tahreef*) of Allah's *Sifaat*?
2. The mistake of those who do *Tahreef*, is their wrong belief that if they affirm the text literally as they appear –they will make the mistake of _____ between Allah and His creatures.
3. What does it mean when we say: The *Asmaa'* and *Sifaat* of Allah are ***Tawqeefiyyah*** ?

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Study Guide Lecture No. Six

Point Two

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah In Matters Relating to the *Worship of Allah*

Their way is to worship Allah [based upon the following three considerations]:

1. **Li-llahi** – **For** Allah [Alone, *Sincerely*]
2. **Bi-llahi** - **By** [the *help* and *Aid* of] Allah
3. **Fi-llahi** - **In** [accordance with the *Deen* of] Allah

As for the first of these considerations - worshipping Allah, *Sincerely* for the sake of Allah [**Li-llahi**]

It means worshipping Allah with **Ikhlāas** (*Sincerity*) :

Seeking only Allah

Seeking to get near to Him

Hoping for His Mercy and Fearing His Punishment

Not desiring to be seen, nor praised.

As for the second of these considerations - worshipping Allah with His *Help* and *Assistance* [**Bi-llahi**]

This is **al-Isti'aanah** seeking Help, Aid and Assistance from Allah;

Knowing that it is not possible to be *proud* of one's self [for one's good deeds];

Acknowledging that you are not *independent* in your worship of Allah,

And seeking to fulfill the meaning of the saying of Allah:

You Alone do we worship, and You Alone do we turn to for Help/Aid

[al-Faatihah 1:5], i.e. Worshipping Allah Alone, with the Help of Allah.

As for the last of these considerations - worshipping Allah according to the Deen of Allah [**Fi-llahi**]

It is **al-Mutaaba'ah**: *Following*; being in *agreement* with, and acting *according* to, the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah.

It means worshipping Allah in *accordance* with what He has legislated upon the tongue (words) of His Messenger Muhammad - without *adding* anything to it, or *subtracting* anything from it.

This is the true worship - which is free of the evils of **Shirk** (association) and **Bid'ah** (innovation). Since, whoever intends - with their worship - to seek something other than Allah, has committed **Shirk**. While whoever worships Allah through any way other than His legislation, has committed **Bid'ah**.

Allah says:

And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him), and offer prayers perfectly and give Charity, and that is the right religion.

[Al-Bayyinah 98:5]

al-Ahwaa' [desires, passions, whims, pleasures] and Al-'Uqool [Intellect]

We are expected to worship Allah - for His Sake Alone, in accordance with His Law, without innovating new things which are made to seem **good** due to following our **desires**.

As for the **intellect** which is healthy and sound - it is not rejected, since it would never cause anyone to contradict the Divine Law of Allah. Sound intellect requires of us to follow the Divine Law. For this reason Allah criticized the **intellect** the deniers of His Messenger, saying: *Nay! Most of them have no sense.* [al-'Ankaboot 29:63]

If we were to follow our *desires*, we would be divided into many sects, each one thinking his way is *good*. In this way we would never achieve the description found in the words of Allah: *Verily, this Ummah (Nation) of yours is One Ummah* [al-Mu'minoon 23:52]. Instead, the way to unity of the Ummah (Nation) is to insist on worshipping Allah Alone, in accordance with what He has legislated.

Al-Bid'ah [Innovation] Refuted

The refutation of those who innovate in beliefs, sayings and actions, claiming their innovation to be something *good* – citing the saying of the Prophet: *Whoever sets a good precedent – in Islam – then, he will have its reward, as well as a reward for anyone who acted according to it after him [following his example]*...Muslim 4/1405, no. 6466; 2/487, no. 2219.

We will simply ask:

Was the '*good*' which you claim is contained in this innovation **hidden** or **unknown** to the Messenger of Allah? Or was it known to him, but he **concealed** it, so that no one of the companions knew about it, and it was preserved until now for you to know?

If he claims that the Prophet did not have knowledge of the '*good*' contained in this innovation, and this is the reason why he did not legislate it – we say that he has made a serious accusation against the Messenger of Allah, in describing him as being *ignorant* in the Deen of Allah and His Divine Sharee'ah.

If he claims that the Prophet knew of this matter, but concealed it from the people – we say that this is even more evil, since this amounts to describing the Messenger of Allah with *al-Khiyaanah* (violation of the trust) in delivering the Message, as well as being stingy with his knowledge, while he was, in fact, the most generous of people.

The other possible explanation for such people, is that they claim the Prophet *knew* of this matter, and *informed* about it, but **it did not reach us**. In that case, we say that such a person discredited the words of Allah: *Verily, We have revealed the Dhikr (Reminder, al-Qur'an), and verily, We will preserve it.* [al-Hajr 16:9] For, if even one law from the Divine Sharee'ah is lost, it means that Allah has not in fact preserved it.

In any case, every person who innovates something by which he/she seeks to get near to Allah – whether in beliefs or actions and speech – is indeed **astray**. This is based upon the statement of the Prophet: *...Beware of newly invented matters, for every invented matter is an innovation and **every innovation** is a going astray, and every going astray is in Hell-Fire.* [Abu Daawood, Tirmidhee; Saheeh (authentic)]

The word **Kullu** (every) used in this hadeeth is *general, absolute and all-inclusive*, without *exception*. Hence, every innovated matter in the *Deen* of Allah is astray, containing no trace of Truth. Allah says: *Such is Allah, your Lord in truth. So after the truth, what else can there be, except error? How then are you turned away?*
[Yoonus 10:32]

In the previous hadeeth, the saying of the Prophet: *Whoever sets a good precedent – in Islam – then he will have its reward, as well as a reward for anyone who acted according to it after him [following his example]...makes it clear that the good precedent which someone does, in which he/she is followed by others, must be something already established in Islam. And whatever is outside of the *Sunnah* (example or laws) of the Messenger of Allah is surely not a part of Islam!*

Additionally, the intended meaning of **sunnah hasanah** (good precedent) in this hadeeth is: to hasten and preceed others, or to be first in hastening to do a good deed, or in the implementation of the *sunnah* (Islamic Practices). This is made crystal clear from the background circumstances of the hadeeth, as recorded in *Saheeh Muslim*:

Jareer ibn Abdullah reported that some desert Arabs clad in woollen clothes came to the Messenger of Allah. He saw them in sad plight as they had been hard pressed by need. He exhorted people to give charity, but they showed some reluctance until (signs) of anger could be seen on his face. Then a person from the Ansaar came with a [huge, heavy] purse containing silver. Then came another person and then other people followed them in succession until signs of happiness could be seen on his face. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah said:

Whoever sets a good precedent – in Islam – then he will have its reward, as well as a reward for anyone who acted according to it after him [following his example] without that person's reward being diminished in any way...

[Muslim 4/1405-1406, no. 6466; 2/487, no. 2219]

From this it becomes clear that the meaning of the words: *Whoever sets a good precedent – is not* whoever legislates [legalizes] something new in Islam. Instead, the meaning is whoever initiates a good action which is *from* the Divine Sharee'ah, and then others follow his example in doing that good deed. Such a person becomes an *Imaam* (Leader) of the people and an *example* or *model* for that which is good. Hence, he/she earns a reward for that action, as well as a reward for whoever follows him in it - until the Day of Resurrection.

Questions:

1. What are the three (3) considerations one must observe in matters of worship?
2. What is the meaning of: Worshipping **Li-llahi**?
3. What is the meaning of: Worshipping **Bi-llahi**?
4. What is the meaning of: Worshipping **Fi-llahi**?
5. What is the meaning of **al-Ikhlaas**?
6. What is the meaning of **al-Mutaaba'ah**?
7. Whoever intends - with their worship – to seek other than Allah, falls into _____.
7. Whoever worships Allah by any way other than His Legislation commits _____.
8. How can we refute those who claim their innovations in Allah's Deen to be 'good'?
9. Are there some 'good' innovations in the Deen of Allah? [Explain]
10. What is the meaning of the hadeeth: *Whoever sets a good precedent in Islam...?*
11. What were the circumstances surrounding this statement of the Prophet?

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Study Guide Lecture No. Seven (7) **Point Two** (cont'd)

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah In Matters Relating to the ***Worship of Allah***

Another Argument Concerning *Bid'ah* (Innovation In the Deen)

In their attempt to justify their innovations in the Deen of Allah - they point out the newly founded or modern ways and **means** which enable one to *implement* or *execute* the *legal* or *legislated* matters in the Deen (*al-wasaa'il al-Moosilah ilaa al-Umoor al-Mashroo'ah*). They point to the use of these **wasaa'il** (ways and means) as a basis or foundation to justify their engagement in innovated practices or acts of worship which have no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet.

They point to the *collection* of the Qur'an [after the death of the Prophet], and putting its separate pages into one book (*Mushaf*), the authoring of books, and building of schools, Rules of *Tajweed*, etc. However, all of these are merely **wasaa'il** (means by which one may achieve a goal), not **ghaayaat** (objectives by which someone seeks to get near to Allah).

The Distinction Between the **Wasaa'il** (Means) and **Ghaayaat** (Objectives)

The **wasaa'il** are the means, and the actual acts of worship are the **ghaayaat** (objectives/goals). New means may be used to achieve the goal – that act of worship which Allah has legislated. However, new acts of worship, or new manners of performing the actual *acts of worship* are not lawful.

Writing down the Qur'an, collecting its written portions, and arranging it all into book form (as a *Mushaf*) is only a *means* for protecting and preserving the Divine Revelation. The means of preserving the Qur'an may be renewed, but the Qur'an itself – the Words of Allah – can never be revived, edited or 'improved' in any way whatsoever [as has been done, by the way, with the Bible].

An Example

Allah says in the Qur'an: *And make ready (preparations) against them (the enemy) all you can of power, including steeds of war to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy... [al-Anfaal 8:60].*

War preparations in the era of the Prophet were not like war preparations of today. In his time, they used *steeds of war*, while today there are *tanks, planes, missiles*, etc. The **objective** (war preparations) is the same, but the **means** to achieve it are new. Using *new means* (***bid'atu waseelah***) is allowed; while innovating new acts of worship – *new objectives* – (***bid'atu ghaAayah***) is forbidden.

The agreed-upon principle here is: *li-l-Wasaa'il Ahkaam al-Maqaasid* : The Means to a thing has the Same Ruling as the Objective (which it leads to). In other words, if the objective is lawful, the means to achieve it is also lawful, (and vice versa).

Hence, the collection of Qur'an, building of schools, development of Rules for the proper recitation of Qur'an, etc. – which are all *wasaa'il* (means to achieve a legal and legislated objective) - are not a proof for those who want to innovate *new acts* of worship or *new manners* of worship which have no basis in the Qur'an and Authentic Sunnah. It is essential to distinguish between modern *means* and innovated *actions*.

Everything that was intended as an *act of worship* – has *already* been *legislated* through the Messenger of Allah, in the revelation which came to him in the form of the Great Qur'an and Purified Sunnah. Allah says: *This day, I have perfected your deen for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your Way of Life...*[al-Maa'idah 5:3] Hence, *nothing new* can be added to Islam!

A Third Argument Concerning Bid'ah (Innovation In the Deen)

Some of those who engage in innovated practices argue that they find – in these innovated practices – an expression of religious enthusiasm, emotional joy and softening of the heart.

We remind them of what Allah informed us of concerning *Shaytaan* saying: *Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left, and You will not find most of them as thankful ones (i.e. they will not be dutiful or obedient to You).* [al-A'raaf 7:17] Instead of calling them to *outright sinful behavior*, he calls them to *innovations* which are presented as acts of *worship*, and something *pleasing* to Allah.

Shaytaan will make their innovations and evil seem good to them. In their *hearts*, they will **feel good** about it, even though it is *outside* of what Allah has **legalized** or legislated in the Qur'an and Authentic Sunnah of the Prophet.

The Prophet informed us that *Shaytaan* travels through a person's body, just like their blood travels through their blood stream. This is mentioned in the Qur'an, in the saying of Allah: *Verily, he (Shaytaan) has no power of those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord (Allah). **His power** is only over those who obey and follow him (Shaytaan) and those mushrikoon (who join partners with Him) (Allah).* [an-Nahl 16:99, 100]

Allah, the Most High, says: *Eat not (O believers) of that (meat) on which Allah's Name has not been pronounced (at the time of slaughtering), for surely it is Fisq (sin and disobedience of Allah). And certainly, the devils do **inspire** their friends (from mankind) to dispute with you, and if you obey them, then you would indeed be **Mushrikoon** (those who join partners with Allah) [since obeying them in what they made lawful, outside of Allah's Law, is equivalent to making them as partners with Allah in His Exclusive Right of Legislation].*

Whoever **obeys** someone - other than Allah and His Messenger – and as a result engages in their innovations in the *Deen* of Allah, has made that person (who is obeyed in the innovated matters) as a partner with Allah [in the **Hukm** (command, judgment, ruling or legislation)]. However, no one has a right to share the *Hukm* with Allah.

Allah, the Most High, says: *Verily, the Command (or Judgment) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the straight religion, but most people do not know.* [Yoosuf 12:40] Whoever associates someone with Allah in His *Hukm* – in the right to Command, Judge or Legislate, has indeed violated the command to *worship none but Him*.

Know that there is no **Tareeq** (Way) to Allah and His Paradise, except that Way which He has set out – upon the tongue of His Messenger.

And for Allah is the Highest Description (Most Perfect Example)...[an-Nahl 16:60] What would you think of someone who tries to reach a king, who has made it known that whoever wants to see him *must* come through a *particular door*; then someone tries to go through *other doors*, instead of the door which the king has appointed? What about someone who tries to reach Allah by any *Way* other than His Way?

Respect and Love For the Prophet Demands *al-Ittibaa'* (Following him)

The truth of the matter is that true respect of the Prophet is exhibited in travelling the path which he traveled, and leaving off that which he left off [al-Hashr 59:7]; and not stepping ahead of him [al-Hujuraat 49:1] – **saying** about the Deen that which he has not said, and **engaging** in that which he has not legislated. It is he who said: **Every innovation is astray...**[Abu Daawood, Tirmidhee]. And he who said: **Whoever does an act which our matter (Islam) is not in agreement with, will have it rejected.**

[al-Bukhaaree, Muslim]

Allah, the Most High, says: **Say (O Muhammad): If you (really) love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.** [Aali 'Imraan 3:31]

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the expression *al-Wasaa'il (waseelah)*?
2. What is the meaning of the expression *al-Ghaayaat (ghaa-yah)*?
3. Is it lawful to use modern **means** (such as airplanes) to achieve a *legal, legislated objective* (such as the requirement to make preparations for war)?
4. How can we answer those who support innovations in acts of worship, by pointing to the use of *modern means* which are used to implement *legislated matters* in Islam?
5. What is the *evidence* that nothing *new* can be added to the *Deen* of Allah? [5:3]
6. Can we use religious *enthusiasm* and *feelings* as a criterion to judge what is good and what is lawful in matters of the *Deen*? [7:17]
7. What is the *ruling* concerning obedience to others in innovated matters?[16:100]
8. How do we express true *love* of Allah and *respect* for the Prophet? [3:31]

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Study Guide Lecture No. Eight **Point Three**

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah Concerning the
Right of the Messenger of Allah

The *Shahaadah* (Testimony of Faith) is Completed by Three Matters

It is well known that one's Islam is not complete except by the testimony (*Shahaadah*) of ***Laa ilaaha illa Allah*** (Nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah) and ***Muhammadan Rasool Allah*** (Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). Likewise, the *Shahaadah* (Testimony of Faith) is not achieved or fulfilled except by three matters:

- (1) *Conviction* in the **Heart**
- (2) *Pronouncement* (testimony) by the **Tongue**
- (3) *Actions* (deeds) by the **Limbs** (body parts)

For this reason testimony by the tongue alone, while not having conviction in the heart is not acceptable. Allah says in the Qur'an: *When the hypocrites come to you (O Muhammad), they say [with their tongues]: We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allah. And Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars.* [al-Munaafiqoon 63:1]

Similarly, someone's testimony to the Prophethood of Muhammad is rejected, if the one who testifies by the tongue does not **act** in accord with their testimony. How can someone oppose the Messenger – if they truly believe that he is the *Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds*?

It is the Right of the Messenger of Allah that We **Love** him (*al-Mahabbah*)

We also love the Prophet due to the *great respect* we have for him, as a direct result of our *Love for Allah* Who has *chosen* Muhammad as His *Final Messenger* to all of mankind. It is through the Prophet, and the guidance which he brought, that we are able to know Allah and worship Him properly.

It is the Right of the Messenger of Allah that We **Honor** him (*at-Ta'dheem*)

We also give the highest honor and respect to him, since he has the highest place of honor in front of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. However, we don't raise him up to a status beyond the status given to him by Allah. He is Allah's *slave-servant and Messenger*. He is the *greatest* and most *perfect* of all humanity in the **worship of Allah**. It is for this reason that we honor and respect him!

The Prophet Does Not Have **Knowledge** of the Unseen (*al-Ghaib*)

We also believe that the Messenger of Allah does *not* have knowledge of the *unseen*, except what Allah reveals to him. **Say** (*O Muhammad*): *I don't tell you that with me are the **Treasures of Allah**, nor that I know the **unseen**; nor do I tell you that I am an **angel**. I only follow what is revealed to me (by Allah)...* [al-An'aam 6:50]. Hence, anyone who *claims* that the Prophet has knowledge of the unseen has denied the words of Allah and His Messenger!

Nor does he control the benefit or harm that may come to him, or that which may befall others. Allah, the Most High, says: **Say** (O Muhammad): *It is not in my power to cause you **harm**, or to bring you to the **Right Path**. Say (O Muhammad): None can protect me from Allah's Punishment (if I were to disobey Him), nor can I find refuge except in Him.* [al-Jinn 72:21, 22]

The Prophet is a Human Being, Having No Characteristic of Lordship (**Ruboobiyyah**)

We also believe that the Prophet of Allah is a human being who has no share in the divine Lordship over the universe. Sometimes he was asked about a matter of the Divine Law (*Sharee'ah*), and was unable to answer until he was informed by revelation; while other times he was corrected by revelation. This proves that he is not All-Knowing, but only a *Slave-Servant* and *Messenger* of Allah.

The Prophet Possessed Human Characteristics (**al-Khasaa'is al-Bashariyyah**)

Like other human beings, he *slept, ate, drank, suffered illness and pain, grieved, become angry and pleased*. He *died* like every other human being. And his family and companions did for him everything which is normally done for a person who dies. Whoever *claims* that he is **alive** – in his grave – praying, fasting, performing pilgrimage, etc. has indeed spoken without knowledge. Allah, the Most High, says: *Verily, **you** (O Muhammad) **will die** and verily, they too will die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be disputing before your Lord.* [az-Zumar 39:30, 31]

Allah says: *Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he **dies** or is **killed**, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least of harm will be do to Allah, and Allah will give reward to those who are grateful.*

[Aali Imraan 3:144]

Questions:

1. What are the (3) matters which complete the **Shahaadah** (*Testimony of Faith*)?
2. Why did Allah call the hypocrites liars, when they testified that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?
3. Why do we have so much *love* and *respect* the Prophet Muhammad?
4. Since the Prophet is so great, did he have knowledge of the Unseen (**al-Ghaib**)?
5. Was the Prophet subject to death and other human characteristics?

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Study Guide Lecture No. Nine **Point Four**

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah Concerning the ***Right of the Sahaabah (Companions)***
(Radiya-llahu 'An-hum)

1. We must acknowledge the rank, worth or value of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and that they are the best of generations.

The Prophet said: *The best of people are my generation (i.e. Sahaabah), then those who follow them (Taabi'oon), then those who follow them (Atbaa' at-Tabi'een)...*

While the *Sahaabah* (Companions) are the best of the Muslim Ummah as a group, individually some of them are preferable to others.

Allah, the Most High, says: *...Not equal among you are those who spent and fought before the conquering (of Makkah) (with those among you who did so later). Such are higher in degree than those who spent and fought afterwards. But, to all, Allah promised the best (reward). And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.*

[al-Hadeed 57:10]

Allah, the Most High, says: *Not equal are those of the believers who sit (at home) - except those who are disabled (by injury or are blind or lame, etc.) - and those who strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives.*

Allah has preferred in grades those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit (at home). Unto each, Allah has promised good (Paradise), but Allah has preferred those who strive hard and fight, above those who sit (at home) by a huge reward. [an-Nisaa' 4:95]

2. The best of the *Sahaabah* (Companions) are the Four Rightly Guided Khalifahs, in the order of their *Khilaafah* (Term of Rulership): Abu Bakr, then Umar, then Uthmaan and then Alee.

This doesn't negate the possibility of another companion being distinguished over Abu Bakr by a special virtue or particular trait or outstanding feat. However, in the general, overall or absolute sense, Abu Bakr is the most virtuous of all companions.

The Prophet clearly recognized a distinction for some companions over others

When there was some difference between Khaalid ibn al-Waleed and Abdur-Rahman ibn 'Awf, and Khaalid has spoken harshly to Abdur-Rahman, the Prophet said to Khaalid: *Do not abuse my companions! I swear by the One in whose Hand is my life - If one of you were to spend (in charity) an amount of gold equal the (the mountain of) Uhud, it would not reach [nor equal] a mudd [a*

dry measure, equal to what may be held in two hands cupped together] nor half of it given by one of them (in charity).

[al-Bukhaaree 5/25, no. 3673 (Darussalam Edition)]

3. Some of the Companions possess a *Mazeeyah* (merit, virtue or superiority) which the others do not possess; and this must be recognized. An example of this is the case of the Companions who are from *Aali Bait ar-Rasool* (direct family of the Messenger of Allah) such as Alee ibn Abi Taalib, Hamzah, al-'Abbaas, Ibn 'Abbaas and others. We love them more than others - from the *perspective* of their being near (blood relatives of) the Prophet of Allah – though not in the *absolute sense*.

4. We are not to go to **extremes** – in *love* or respect of the Family of the Prophet, as the *Rawaafidh* (*Shee'ah*) do, nor the extremes of *hated* for them as the *Nawaasib* do. The position of *Ahlu-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah* is the middle path – between the two extremes.

Questions:

1. Which generation of Muslims was the **Best**?
2. Are the *Companions* of the Prophet all equal in merit, virtue and excellence?
3. Was *Alee ibn Abi Taalib* considered the best of all the Companions?
4. Give an example of a *Mazeeyah* (merit, virtue or superiority) possessed by some Companions, to the exclusion of all others.
5. *Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah* do not go to **extremes** – in *love of the Family* of the Prophet.
[Explain]

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Study Guide Lecture No. Nine (con't) **Point Five**

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah Concerning the
***Rights of the al-Awliyaa' (Friends of Allah) and
al-A'immah (Imaams)***

The Imaams are not considered to be Infallible (*Ma'soom*)

Although the Imaams or great scholars of the Divine Law (Sharee'ah) are well known and praised for their achievements and accomplishments, and their worth is recognized by all Muslims – it is not believed that they are infallible.

No one is considered by *Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah* as being incapable of making mistakes, and remaining on their mistakes without being corrected – except the Messenger of Allah. He, alone, is protected from remaining on a mistake; if he were to err in any matter, Allah would correct him.

No matter what level of scholarship the Imaams reached, they could never be considered as incapable of mistakes and errors. Everyone of them erred, and the opinions of everyone of them may be accepted or rejected – except the Messenger of Allah – whom we have been *ordered by Allah to obey* with absolute obedience.

Allah said: *O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those in authority from amongst you (Muslims)...*[an-Nisaa' 4:59]

The Awliyaa' (Friends) of Allah

Just as recognition of the *Imaams*, does not mean confirming for them infallibility (*'Usmah*), likewise acknowledging *al-Awliyaa'* does not mean acknowledging for them *knowledge of the unseen* or control over the universe.

Nor do we consider as a *Walee* (Friend of Allah) those who claim for themselves such titles, or make false claims (of 'super-natural' powers) in order to attract the unsuspecting masses to them.

Allah makes the matter crystal clear with His Saying: *No doubt! Verily, the Awliyaa' of Allah, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.*

They are those who have Emaan (belief in the Uniqueness of Allah, and that He alone deserves to be worshipped), and have Taqwa (fearing Allah, by doing good deeds and abstaining from evil). [Yoonus 10:63]

They have two qualities: *Emaan: al-'Aqeedah* (Faith and Firm Conviction); and *Taqwa: al-'Amal* (Good Deeds and Speech). This is the real *Walee!* Not those who collect the ignorant masses and

dazzle and deceive them with tricks, or with the help of the devils. The true *Walee* is recognized by his *Strict Following* of the Messenger of Allah, as well as his *Emaan* (Faith) and *Taqwa* (Piety).

However, even the true *Walee* may not necessarily perform any ***Karaamah*** (extra-ordinary, ‘super-natural’ feats). There are many *Awliyaa’* who lived and died without having performed any *Karaamah*. This is because the *Karaamah* is normally used by Allah to *support the Truth* or *repulse Falsehood*, not necessarily to confirm a particular person as a *Walee* of Allah. The scholars say: *Every karaamah of a Walee, is in fact an Aayah (sign of the truthfulness) of the Prophet which the Walee followed!*

The Two Expressions: *Aayah* and *Mu’jizah*

It is more proper to refer to such *extra-ordinary feats* as ***Aayah*** (sign) rather than ***Mu’jizah*** (miracle) since this is the Qur’anic expression used for such ‘*super natural*’ events. The term *Aayah* is more expressive and deeper in meaning than the term *Mu’jizah*.

The meaning of *Aayah* is: A *sign* of the truthfulness of what the Messenger has brought to the people. While *Mu’jizah* may refer to tricks done by a magician or trickster (*musha’widh*); or that which is done by a very strong person who is capable of doing something which others are incapable of doing (‘***ajiza*** ‘*an-hu ghairu-hu*).

Questions:

1. Is it correct to follow any one of the ***Imaams*** in his *every opinion* or *position*?
2. Can we follow the Prophet in his *every statement and action*? [Explain]
3. What is the *Qur’anic criterion* for defining ***Awliyaa’*** of Allah? [Yoonus 10:63]
4. Is it the purpose of the ***Karaamah*** to prove that someone is a *Walee*?
5. What is the difference between the two expressions: ***Aayah*** and ***Mu’jizah***?

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Study Guide Lecture No. Ten **Point Six**

The Way of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah Concerning
Al-Islaah Fi al-Mujtama'ah
(*Reformation, Correction, Improvement of the Society*)

1. The Ahlu-s-Sunnah hold the view that the betterment and correction of the society will not be complete unless it is in accordance with that which Allah, the Most High, has legislated for it. For this reason, they see the necessity of ***Al-Amru bi-l-Ma'roof*** (Commanding the Good) and ***An-Nahyu 'an al-Munkar*** (Forbidding the Evil).

Al-Ma'roof: Every good which is recognized and confirmed by the *Sharee'ah* (Divine Law).

Al-Munkar: Every thing which is rejected, disapproved of, and declared to be forbidden by the *Sharee'ah* (Divine Law).

2. When this *reformative element* (Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil) is lost, the inevitable result is *at-Tafarruq* (separation and division) of the members of the society – every *individual* engaging in whatever he/she sees fit. While, if the good is commanded and the evil forbidden, the *Ummah* (Islamic Society) will be united and successful. This is pointed to in the saying of Allah:

*Let there arise out of you a group of people **inviting** to all that is good (Islaam), **enjoining al-Ma'roof** (monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and **forbidding al-Munkar** (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden). And it is they who are the successful.*

*And be not as those who are **divided** and **differed** among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment*
[Aali 'Imraan 3:104, 105]

3. However, not everything viewed by one person as *Ma'roof* (good), will necessarily be viewed by the next person as *Ma'roof* (good); except in those matters which are clearly identified by the *Sharee'ah* as being so. Whereas, those matters in which there is room for *Ijtihad* (striving to reach the correct opinion) – two people might differ with one another as to whether or not something is *Ma'roof* (good) or not. In such cases, the final judgement will be determined by the *Qur'an* and Authentic *Sunnah*.

Allah, the Most High, says: *O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger of Allah, and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. And if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.*
[an-Nisaa' 4:59]

Three Necessary Considerations For Commanding Good and Forbidding Evil

- 1st. One must have correct **knowledge** of the *Islamic Ruling* concerning the matter which you are going to command or forbid. One must be sure that what you are commanding the people with is *actually Ma'roof* (good), and what you are forbidding them is *actually Munkar* (evil) – in accordance with the *Sharee'ah* (Divine Law), not simply what one *thinks* or *believes* to be so.
- 2nd. *Before commanding* someone to do *al-Ma'roof* (good), one must be sure that the person has not already fulfilled the obligation upon them in that matter, or that the person doesn't have a *legal excuse* or *exemption* from that obligation. Likewise, *before forbidding* someone from *al-Munkar* (evil), one must be sure that the person has in fact engaged in that forbidden act, and has no legitimate excuse for doing so. One must be sure of the condition of the person being commanded or forbidden.
- 3rd. The resultant harm or evil - which may come about due to someone's *commanding good* or *forbidden evil* – should not be greater than the evil which you are trying to stop, nor weightier than the good which you are trying to achieve. Therefore, there may be cases where it may not be beneficial or wise to forbid an evil, if the resultant harm or evil is greater than the evil which you are trying to stop. In such cases, one should be patient and let things take their natural course, and Allah brings an end to that evil in time.

In such cases, we are expected to apply the rule of *at-Tadarruj* (Graduality). Little by little steering the people away that evil, until they leave it completely.

General Principle

“Inna Dar’a al-Mafaasid muqaddim ‘ala Jalbi al-Masaalih”
*Repulsing **harm** takes precedence over the procurement/acquisition of **benefit**.*

This principle is indicated in the Qur'an, in the saying of Allah, the Most High:

*And do not **insult** those whom they (the pagan disbelievers) worship [call upon] besides Allah, lest they **insult** Allah wrongfully without knowledge...*[al-'An'aam 6:108]

However, this principle is not absolute, i.e. it is not applicable in absolutely every situation. It is applicable if the case where the resultant harm or evil is equal to the benefit intended by the action. Likewise, it is applicable in the situation where the resultant harm is greater than the benefit intended.

On the other hand, in the situation where the resultant harm or evil is insignificant in comparison to the benefit achieved by the intended action – precedence is given to the benefit, without consideration of the resultant harm.

An Example From *al-Ahkaam al-Kawaniyyah* (Universal Laws)

An example of this is the general, overall benefit - for the *land, people* and *animals* - which comes with **rain**. The very same rain might cause harm to someone who has just built the roof on his house. It might ruin all of his work. However, this harm is *insignificant* in the face of the general benefit received by every other creature.

An Example from *al-Ahkaam ash-Shar'eeyah* (Legislative/Legal Rulings)

Of the many examples found in the *Sharee'ah* (Divine Law) is the prohibition of *ar-Ribaa* (Interest), *al-Khamr* (Alcohol) and *al-Maisir* (Gambling). Although it is a loss to some of the people – the prohibition of these things is of general benefit to most of the people, or the society as a whole. Hence, looking to the general benefit of the majority outweighs, and takes precedence over, the loss of the few.

Questions:

1. What is meant by the terms: *al-Ma'roof* and *al-Munkar*?
2. What is the benefit of *Commanding the Good* and *Forbidding Evil* in the Society?
3. When people differ as to what is *good* and *bad*, how can we resolve their difference?
4. What are the three *Considerations* in *Commanding the Good* and *Forbidding Evil*?
5. What is the *General Principle* applied to the situation where both benefit and harm may result from the same action?
6. Is this an *Absolute Principle* for every situation? [Explain]

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Study Guide Lecture No. Ten (cont'd) **Point Seven**

The Saying of Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah Concerning Faith/Belief ***Al-Emaan***

The reality of *Emaan*, according to Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah is:

- 1st. *Conviction* in the Heart,
- 2nd. *Speech* on the Tongue, and
- 3rd. *Actions* by the Limbs (body parts).

The proof for this statement is the saying of the Messenger of Allah:

*Verily, al-Emaan (Faith) consists of seventy some odd branches; the highest of them is the saying: **Laa ilaaha illa Allah** (Nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah); and the lowest branch is the **removal of something harmful from the road**; and **al-Hayaa'** (Modesty) is a branch of *Emaan*..*

[al-Bukhaaree & Muslim]

The Speech upon the tongue is the saying: *Laa ilaaha illa Allah*.

The Action of the limbs is *removing something harmful from the road*.

The *Action of the heart* is *modesty*.

The Conviction in the heart is believing in Allah, His Angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers, the Judgement Day, and the Divine Decree, the good and bad of it.

And this is based upon the saying of the Prophet:

Al-Emaan is to believe in Allah His Angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers, the Judgement Day, and to believe in the Divine Decree, the good and bad of it.

[Muslim, from Umar ibn al-Khattaab]

Ahlu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah also hold that *Emaan* (Faith) **increases** and **decreases**. The Qur'an points to its increase, while *rational necessity* points to the fact that everything which is confirmed to increase, must necessarily have the potential to decrease.

Allah says in the Qur'an: *...And the believers may **increase** in Faith...*[al-Muddaththir 74:31]

Allah says: *As for those who believe, it has **increased** their Faith.* [at-Tawbah 9:124]

[see also: *Aali 'Imraan* 3:173; *al-Anfaal* 8:2; *al-Ahzaab* 33:22; *al-Fath* 48:4; and the Chapter Heading (33) of Imaam al-Bukhaaree 1/76, no. 44: ***Faith Increases and Decreases***]

Since, *Emaan* also includes *speech* and *actions*, there is no doubt that the speech of the people differs from one person to another. The one who says: **Subhaan Allah** (Allah is Free from all Imperfections), *wa al-Hamdu li-llah* (all Praise belongs to Allah), *wa Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) one time is certainly not like the one who says it one hundred times.

Likewise, the *Emaan* which is *conviction in the heart* also differs in *strength* and *weakness* from one person to another. The Prophet Ibraaheem said: *...My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead. He (Allah) said: Do you not believe? He (Ibraaheem) said: Yes (I believe), but in order that the **conviction in my heart** will be **stronger**...*[al-Baqarah 2:260]

No doubt that which is reported is not like witnessing something with your own eyes. Hence, we say: *al-Emaan* increases and decreases; the righteous *actions* and *speech*, as well as the *conviction* which is in the Heart. And whoever denies this is in contradiction to the *Sharee'ah* as well as the *reality* which one experiences in life.

Questions:

1. What is the comprehensive definition of *al-Emaan*?
2. What is the Highest and lowest branch of *al-Emaan*?
3. Give a proof that *al-Emaan* includes both actions and speech.
4. Give an example of the *Emaan* of the Heart.
5. How can someone cause their *Emaan* to increase?

End of the Essay:

***Methodology (Minhaaj) of Ahlus-Sunnah wa-l-Jamaa'ah
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