

MODULE 1

Class Title: Being steadfast

Aim of the lesson: To understand how life's challenges help us discover who we are.

Category: Interpersonal Skills

Lesson Format: Power point presentation with narration and discussion

(Greeting to students) *AssalamalaikumwaRahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanirRajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *BismillahirRahmanirRaheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbishrahlisadriwayassirliamriwahluluqdatummillisaniyafqahuqawli*(Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slide 1:

Teacher: Has anyone ever travelled on a ship?

Student: Yes.

Slide 2:

Teacher: How does it feel when you're sailing in calm waters?

Student: I really liked it; it's very nice and soothing.

Slide 3:

Teacher: Okay, now imagine that you are on a ship in a storm. How would you feel?

Student: Scared.

Slide 4:

Teacher: What forces are acting on a ship in a storm?

Student: Winds and the force of the waves.

Slide 5:

Teacher: Yes. Forceful winds and forceful waves act on the boat.

Slide 6:

We are also like a ship in the sea. Sometimes we are in calm waters and sometimes we are in the middle of a storm and we need to learn how to handle each wave as it comes. Now what would you say if I ask you what forces act on us when we are in a stormy situation in our life?

Student: Our own emotions

Teacher: Yes! And all the fears and thoughts that follow every time something negative happens. You may call this our inner self. The Quran uses the word *nafs*{ego}for this; *inshaAllah*, we will talk about our *nafs* in detail today.

Can anyone think of anything else? I'll give you a hint: there is a being which is always around and trying to influence us.

Student: *Shaytan*{Satan}!

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*, right on dot.

Slide 7:

So let's list the forces that act on us when we are in a stormy situation.

1. The situation itself. This is what we need to evaluate and find a solution to.
2. Our inner self, the *nafs*which keeps bringing up our wishes and desires and wants us to fulfill them.
3. *Shaytan*who constantly whispers in our hearts and minds because he wants us to make the wrong choice and give in to our *nafs*.

Slide 8:

In order to understand the working of these forces let's talk about an example: what is the ideal thing to do when you hear the *adhan* {call to prayer} for *Maghrib* {obligatory evening prayer}? The ideal thing to do is to do *wudu* {ablution} and say your *salah*{prayer} immediately. But in actual life what happens most of the time? We get distracted.

Just at that moment your friend might call to ask about homework or you might be working on an assignment and may decide to finish it before saying your *salah*. You might be watching a very good documentary about astronomy with your family and may decide to do your *salah* after it ends. Or just then you may remember that you were supposed to tell your friend's mother that she will come home late from school as she has to take some remedial class, or you may just be feeling lazy and may decide say your *salah* in a while.

Slide 9:

You see, the requirement of the moment is that you do your *salah* immediately and all the other thoughts that are causing the delay are from your *nafs* and *shaytan*.

Slide 10:

Now, let's watch a video that will, *inshaAllah*, help you to understand what I am talking about.

(Show Hijab video)

Slides 11 and 12:

Always remember, doing good deeds is not very simple. Whenever, we think about doing a good deed, we will have to face 3 opposing forces:

1. The situation,
2. Our inner self, the *nafs*, and
3. *Shaytan*.

Slide 13:

Our problem is that we get distracted and sometimes forget what we have set out to do.

Slide 14:

The Prophet (pbuh) once said, "The heart (*qalb*) takes its name from its constant changes (*taqallub* – alteration, variation, ups and downs). The likeness of the heart is that of a feather at the root of a tree, being turned over and over by the wind." [Ahmad]

Now this does not mean that we think, since it is an inherent quality of the heart that it is always turning, there's nothing we can do. It means that we need to learn to control and handle our hearts, just like we tame our pets and other animals, for our own benefit. You see, temptations are constantly thrown at us, and whenever we are faced with such a situation our *nafs* wants its desires to be fulfilled and *Shaytan* also wants us to give in to our *nafs*, while Allah (swt) wants us to rise above ourselves. So we need to learn to control our desires and not give in to our *nafs* and *Shaytan*.

Slides 15-18:

So, what is the solution? We have identified 3 opposing forces, now how do we handle them? Let's look at them one by one.

1. The situation: this is an external factor and beyond our control. These situations are generally tests for us, so we need to assess them objectively and try to find effective solutions.

2. *Shaytan*: Though he seems to be very strong, the truth is that he has no power over us. He can only whisper bad ideas into our minds and hearts, but he cannot force us to do anything. Whatever we choose to do is our own choice. Most importantly, he is afraid of Allah (swt) and disappears when we remember Allah (swt).
3. Our inner self, the *nafs*: This is the most difficult to identify and control. Firstly, you must identify your emotions and understand the reasons behind those emotions. Then put your emotions aside and find solutions. We must also remember not to give in to the whispers of *Shaytan*. Ask for Allah's (swt) help; make lots of du'a and ask for his protection and guidance. And after that, go ahead and pursue which ever solution you feel is the best, and don't let anything get in your way.

Slide 20:

Now once you have learnt how to handle these three enemies you will, *inshaAllah*, develop a very good quality and become closer to being a *khalifa*{vicegerent}of Allah (swt). And the quality is being steadfast.

Slide 21:

Allah (swt) says in the Quran, "Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allah will cause to go astray those who are *zaalimoon* (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.), and Allah does what He wills." (Surah Ibrahim 14: Verse 27)

Slides 22-28:

Now I'll tell you a story; I am telling you this story to make you understand that one must never give up and should try one's best to carry out what one has set out to do.

A man woke up early in order to perform *Fajr* {obligatory Morning Prayer} at the *masjid* {mosque}. He got dressed, did his *wudu* and was on his way to the *masjid* when he fell, and his clothes got dirty. He got up, brushed himself off and headed home. At home, he changed his clothes, did his *wudu* again and was on his way to the *masjid* when he fell again at the exact same spot! He got up again, brushed himself off and headed home. At home he changed his clothes, did his *wudu* once again and left for the *masjid*. This time, when he came near the spot where he had fallen twice, he met a man holding a lamp.

He asked the man who he was and the man replied, "I saw you fall twice on your way to the *masjid*, so I brought a lamp to light your way."

The first man thanked him profusely and the two went on to the *masjid*. Once at the *masjid*, the first man asked the man with the lamp to come in and pray *Fajr* with him. The second man refused. The first man asked him some more times and, again, the answer was the same.

When the first man asked him why he did not wish to come in and pray, the man replied, “I am Satan.”

The man was shocked at this reply.

Satan went on to explain, “I saw you on your way to the *masjid* and it was I who made you fall. When you went home, cleaned yourself and left for the *masjid* again, Allah (swt) forgave all your sins. I made you fall a second time, and even that did not encourage you to stay home, rather, you left for the *masjid* again. Because of that, Allah (swt) forgave all the sins of the people in your household. I was afraid that if I made you fall one more time, Allah (swt) would forgive the sins of all the people in your village, so I made sure that you reached the *masjid* safely!”

Slides 29 and 30:

Let’s take a look at what lessons we can learn from this story:

1. Do not let Satan get the better of you.
2. Do not put off a good deed that you intend to do due to difficulties, because you never know how much reward you might receive from the hardships you encounter while trying to achieve that goal.

Slide 31:

You see, life’s challenges are not supposed to paralyze you. They are supposed to help you discover who you are; difficulties help us overcome our own fears. They help us overcome different inhibitions; they help us to channelize ourselves and to experiment with different things. If we are able to find the courage to go through these difficulties, we become better people.

Slides 32-34:

Let’s look at an example: suppose that you have just done your *wudu* and it is time for *Zuhr* {obligatory midday prayer} and you are about to stand for your *salah*. All of a sudden, there is a knock on the door. You open the door to find your neighbor’s very young daughter, standing at your doorstep. She is crying and asking for help because there is no one in their house, her mother has just fainted and she doesn’t know what to do. What will you do now?

Student: Allah (swt) has said that we should take care of others first, so we should take her to the hospital and then say our *qazaa*.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*, that is one option but one must also try not to delay the salah too much.

However, the important thing is that you need to take her to the hospital. Firstly, you need to attend to the patient; you need to go to the other house and determine how serious the problem is. The mother has fainted, but if you sprinkle a little water on her, she might wake up. But if she doesn't regain consciousness, you might need to call the ambulance. Call the ambulance and in the meantime, you can do your *salah*.

However, if you are too worked up, maybe you can delay it for a bit longer, because the *adhan* has just been recited. You still have time to say your *salah*. Yes, you will not be rewarded as much as if you were doing it instantly; the reward for your *salah* will be reduced, but the important thing to understand here is that, Allah (swt) has said in the Quran that the reward for saving **one** life is equal to that of saving the **whole** of mankind. So the rewards are much greater.

If we make a comparison, we can see that both actions i.e. saying your *salah* and saving somebody's life are good deeds. **But** this is an emergency. So you need to be quick about this and you can't delay it. Saving a life is extremely important and *salah* can be delayed in this case. Like I said, the reward for the delayed *salah* will be less but we need to realize that the reward for saving a person's life is unimaginable. You can't calculate how much you will be rewarded for it.

Slides 35-43:

Now, let's take a look at history and try to see what lessons we can learn from it. This is an incident which happened during the reign of Umar (ra). When he was a *khalifah*, some companions of the Prophet (pbuh) were captured by a non-Muslim, enemy king. The king warned all the captured companions that they must leave their *deen* {Islam} and say bad things about their God, otherwise he would throw them in kilns of hot, boiling oil. The companions simply refused to do that.

Then the king called upon the *Ameer*. Do you know who an *Ameer* is? The leader of the Muslims present at that time. The king told him that he must jump into the oil if he doesn't want to renounce his religion. The *Ameer* still refused to give up his religion. At this point, the king gave the *Ameer* time to think and called upon another companion to be punished in the same way. The other companion was called, thrown in the hot kiln of oil, and he burned and died instantly. So, the king set an example for everyone, showing them that he was actually going to go through with this punishment, and then he asked everyone yet again to give up their *deen*. They all turned him down yet again.

Then the king summoned the *Ameer*. As soldiers walked him to the kiln, the king noticed that he was crying; there were tears running down his face. So the king spoke to him again expecting him to change his mind. The *Ameer* reassured the king that he didn't fear death and had not changed his mind at all; in fact he was crying because he realized that he had just one life to

sacrifice in the way of Allah (swt). He wished that he had a thousand lives, so that he could have given them all in the way of Allah (swt); this one would be lost in just a few minutes. That was how much love the companions had for Allah (swt).

The king was really impressed by this and admitted that he did not even love **life** to the extent that the **companions loved death**. So he promised to release them if the *Ameer* kissed his head; he knew that he hadn't been able to scare them with death, so he thought he could punish them by humiliating them. The *Ameer* thought about it and agreed to kiss the king's head, on the condition that all his fellow Muslims would be released if he did so. (ref: **stories from the hadith** by Muhammad Zakariya Iqbal, pg: 66-68)

Are you surprised at what he did? No? Why?

Student: Because by doing something simple he was able to save the lives of his companions.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah*, very good, *mashaAllah*.

The king agreed to that condition and the *Ameer* kissed the king's forehead and got freedom for all his companions. When they reached home, Umar (ra) was informed about the entire episode and was very happy with the *Ameer*, praising the strength of his belief and insight.

Slides 44-46:

This story gives us a general rule which is: The Creation (i.e. the *mukhlooq*), will not be obeyed at the cost of the Creator's disobedience; one cannot obey a human at the cost of disobeying Allah (swt) (Sahih AlJami - Al-AlBani). This means that giving up your faith is not acceptable at any cost. That's why the companions did not compromise their faith. No matter what the king said, the commandments of Allah (swt) were never compromised.

Slide 47:

So, if somebody tells you not to do your *salah* and they say that it really doesn't matter, you can't listen to them! We have been commanded by Allah (swt) to say our *salah*; it is something we cannot compromise on.

Or, like the video we saw in which *Shaytan* convinced the girl to get all decked up. He convinced her to compromise on her *hijab* {covering} and the girl gave in to him. However, when the king was asking the companions to give up their faith, they did not give in.

But we need to realize that we can compromise on our own self-esteems and egos. That's what the companions did. When the king asked the *Ameer* to kiss his forehead, he agreed to do it immediately; he compromised on his own self-esteem. This is what is meant by the phrase that the created i.e. the *mukhlooq*, will not be obeyed at the cost of the Creator's disobedience. We don't have to obey any created being, just because they are telling us to do something. *Shaytan*

and our own *nafs* are created beings; we should obey them in a manner that results in disobedience to Allah (swt).

When we understand this rule and implement it in our lives, i.e. we don't obey the *mukhlooqat* the cost of disobedience to Allah (swt), we become steadfast in our religion. We become firm in our religion; our priorities stand corrected. We know that Allah (swt) comes first, before everything else. That is being steadfast.

Slides 48-53:

And while we are talking about being steadfast, it would be very unfair if we don't talk about Hazrat Ibrahim (as), who was a very steadfast person. Does anybody know anything about Ibrahim (as)?

Student: When Hazrat Ibrahim (as) was young, he used to think about God. First, he thought the sun was the god but then he saw that it disappeared at the end of the day. Then he thought it was the moon but that also disappeared at the end of every night. Then he thought it was the stars but they disappeared at the end of the night as well. Later on, he discovered God. He also disliked the false idols which his father and other people worshipped. One day, when everyone else was gone, he took an axe and chopped down all the idols except the largest one. And he put the axe in its hand.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah!* Anyone wants to add to that?

Student: When the people came back and asked him who had done all this destruction, he pointed to the largest idol and said he must have done it since he had the axe. They asked how he could have done it, since he was just a statue which couldn't even move. So Ibrahim (as) responded that he should not be prayed to, since he couldn't even do anything.

Teacher: Absolutely! Yes, you all know about Ibrahim (as), *alhamdulillah*.

You see when Allah (swt) tested him in anyway, no matter how difficult the situation was, he only submitted to Allah (swt); he never gave in to anybody else. He was a very steadfast person.

Student: When Ibrahim (as) was going to be burnt, he did not give in to the king and so Allah (swt) rewarded him by saving him.

Teacher: Absolutely! He was being thrown into the fire by the king and he was fine with that. In fact, he jumped into the fire because he believed in Allah (swt). He refused to obey anybody else, no matter what so he was thrown into the fire. Later, he was thrown out of his country; he was exiled. He left, he didn't care. He went to live in a desert. He left his wife and son in the desert for Allah (swt)'s sake. He was ready to **kill his own son** for Allah (swt)'s sake. And he did all of this without flinching, so he was a very steadfast person, *alhamdulillah*. And that is the reason

why Allah (swt) loved him and called him his friend and told all Muslims, even the Prophet (pbuh), to follow his path.

Slide 54:

Allah (swt) says: “And who turns away from the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) (i.e. Islamic Monotheism) except him who befools himself? Truly, We chose him in this world and verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2: Verse 130)

You see Ibrahim (as) is an example for all of us and that is what Allah (swt) is telling us in this *ayat* {verse}. He’s telling us that shouldn’t turn away from the way of Ibrahim (as) because he was one of the righteous people.

Slide 55:

We will end our class today with this du’a:

“O Lord! Pour forth on us patience, set our feet firm and make us victorious over the disbelieving people.”(Surah Al-Baqarah 2: Verse 250)

Du’a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulIzzati ‘ammayasifunwasalamun ‘alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil ‘alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

REFERENCE:

Stories from the Hadith by Muhammad Zakariya Iqbal

Pg: 66-68

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