

## **MODULE 1**

**Class Title:** Test of Life

**Aim of the lesson:** To understand how we should cope with trial sent by Allah (swt)

**Category:** Personal Development

**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:

Today, *inshaAllah*, I'm going to tell you a story. Do all of you enjoy listening to stories?

Slides 2-4:

Ok, this is a story about life. There was once an old man who lived by the sea. He was very poor. However, many people, including the king, were jealous of the man because he owned a very special and beautiful horse. Do you like horses? I love horses. I think they are very graceful animals. So you see, even the king really liked his horse and many people wanted it; they kept asking him to sell his horse to them, but he would always refuse, saying that the horse was not just an animal for him, it was a friend, and of course he wouldn't sell a friend. So he wouldn't sell the horse to anybody.

Slide 5:

Then one morning, he woke up to find the stable empty; the horse was missing. Can anybody guess happened to the horse?

Student: Somebody stole it.

Student: It ran away.

Slide 6:

When this happened all the people of the village gathered and mocked the man, telling him that he should've just sold his horse and made some money off it, and pointing out that since somebody had stolen it, he had nothing left. They said all kinds of mean things like calling him crazy.

Slide 7:

In response, the man simply said, “Don’t assume that someone has stolen my horse; all you know is that the horse is not in its stable. That’s a fact. Everything else is a judgment. I don’t know whether this is a misfortune or a blessing, only Allah (swt) knows because this is only a fragment. Who knows what will follow?”

Slide 8:

Like one of you said, the horse had actually just run away and came back after some time. And when it came back, it brought twelve beautiful horses with it! Now what do you think people had to say about that?

Student: They probably thought he was very lucky.

Absolutely, that’s exactly how they reacted. They told him he was very lucky to have so many beautiful horses and said that he was right, because it was not a misfortune that his horse had run away.

Slide 9:

To this the man said, “You’re assuming too much again; all you know is that the horse is back. Who knows whether this is a blessing or not? Only Allah (swt) knows. This is only a fragment.”

Slide 10:

Now the man had only one son who started training the twelve new horses. One day he fell from a horse and broke both his legs. So, in the end, it turned out to be a misfortune.

Again, the villagers told the man that he was right in saying that there was nothing lucky about getting the twelve horses, because his only son fell off one of them and lost both his legs.

Slide 11:

The man replied. “You people are obsessed with judgment, don’t assume things. All you know is that my only son has broken his legs. Nobody knows if this is a blessing or a misfortune, only Allah (swt) knows. Life comes in fragments.”

Slides 12 and 13:

After some time the man’s country declared war on another country, so the government started recruiting young men from every city, town and village. The army came to the man’s village too and recruited every young man except the man’s son, because he didn’t have his legs. So, every young man, except the man’s son, had to fight in the war. The villagers knew that many of the men would not come back. So, again, they told the man how lucky he was because his son was with him while all their sons had to go away and might not come back.

Slide 14:

So the man replied, “You just don’t understand; you’re judging again. You only know that your sons were forced to join the war and my son was not. Only Allah (swt) knows if this is a blessing or a misfortune. How do you think the story ended?”

Slide 15:

Student: The story goes on with more ups and downs in the man’s life.

Teacher: *Alhamdulillah!* Very good! The process continues. As long as one is alive the process continues.

Slide 16:

You see that is what life is all about and that is what Allah (swt) says in the *Qur’an*, “Verily in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and in the alternation of the night and day there are signs for men of understanding.” (Surah Al-‘Imran 3: Verse 190)

Slide 17:

So, Allah (swt) wants us to become people who understand, who look around, who feel what is going on and that is why He has created the Heavens and the Earth and the night and day which follow one another. The alteration of night and day is so common, so regular that we don’t even feel it, we don’t even think about it but sometimes, when we experience ups and downs in life, we get effected strongly, don’t we? Every time we come across a down, we get shaken up badly, and when we experience an up we become extremely happy. So we are always going through ups and downs in life.

Day and night are two different things and they have two different functions. Our activities during the day are different and our activities during the night are different. What do we do during the day?

Student: We play.

Student: We go to school.

Student: We work.

Teacher: And what do we do at night?

Student: Sleep, mostly.

Teacher: Yes, we relax in the evenings. We sleep and rest and sometimes we socialize while sometimes we have to study at night, but that usually happens during exams. So during the day we pursue different kinds of activities. We are up and about, we go out, we do many things like

going to school and working and we are generally busy. At night we get the time for relaxation. Most people want to go home and relax, have some dinner and get some sleep.

So there is a great sign in this cycle of day and night for us.

Slide 18:

What about the four seasons, how do they work? One season follows the other and each season has its own characteristics. Not one season is similar to the other. All the seasons follow one another and they come in alternation. And so the cycle continues.

Slide 19:

We can also see some other cycles in nature. An example is the life cycle of a butterfly. A butterfly lays an egg, the egg turns into a larva which turns into pupae which then turns into a butterfly. So, the butterfly develops in stages. But the egg doesn't know what kind of difficulties it will have to face when it turns into a larva. It doesn't even know what the next stage in its life cycle is. We know because we are looking at the bigger picture.

Slide 20:

Let's discuss another example. The lifecycle of a fish also starts with an egg which continues to grow up into an adult fish; it also goes through several stages.

Slide 21:

Now let's discuss the human life cycle, let's look at ourselves. We also start as a fertilized egg and then we develop into a fetus and gradually grow into a baby and our life cycle continues. At each and every point of our life, we have different experience. The baby doesn't know how difficult it is to grow up and become a child. The baby doesn't know what it's going to go through in the future.

Do you have any idea what experiences you'll have in twenty years? No, you don't, right? Does anybody here know what is going to happen with them in the next ten years? Can anybody tell? We don't know. But Allah (swt) knows because He knows our whole life cycle. We are inside the frame, He is outside the frame. And he can see each and every life cycle going on in the world, whether it is an animal's and whether it is yours or mine; each one of us has a different life cycle and Allah (swt) can see each lifecycle simultaneously. That is the power and vision of Allah (swt)

Slide 22:

Allah (swt) says in the *Qur'an*, "We give to men by turns." (Surah Al-'Imran 3: Verse 140)

Slide 23:

This *ayat* (verse) tells us that life is cyclic, things come and go. We experience ups and downs; that's what life is all about.

Slides 24-25:

Now let's discuss an example: suppose you give your O level exams and your grades are so outstanding that Harvard University offers you admission, with full scholarship, without you even having to give your A level exams. How would you feel?

Student: Very happy.

Student: Extremely excited.

Teacher: Right. You'd be extremely happy and you'd feel honored and you'll be grateful that you've been rewarded for your hard work.

Slide 26:

The *Qur'an* says, "As for man when His Lord tries him by giving him honor and gifts then he says puffed up, my Lord has honored me." (Surah Al-Fajr 89: Verse 15)

Allah (swt) knows how we react; when we get anything good we feel that Allah (swt) is rewarding us and honoring us. There is nothing wrong with feeling this way, right? We are merely feeling grateful to Allah (swt).

We need to realize that there is a very important lesson in all of this. The world is not a place of rewarding. This is not the place where Allah (swt) rewards or gives punishments; this is the place where Allah (swt) tests us. Our whole life is a test for us, so the nice things that Allah (swt) gives us are also a test and we need not feel proud about them. So, how should we react when we get something nice?

Student: We should pray to Allah (swt) and thank Him.

Student: We should be humble and should not show off.

Slide 27:

Very good, *mashaAllah*. Firstly, the minute you get something nice, remember Allah (swt). Remember that He is the One Who has given it to you. Remember that you could not have achieved this on your own if Allah (swt) didn't want this for you; there was no way that you could've gotten this if Allah (swt) had not made it possible for you. And be truly grateful to Allah (swt). Realize that this is a blessing from Allah (swt).

You should also do *sadaqah* (charity). *Sadaqah* means giving charity but is not the same thing as *zakat* (Islamic tax).

You should also continue to work hard and do your best to fulfill responsibilities because getting into Harvard University doesn't mean that your problems have ended; now you have new responsibilities and you need to work hard. You haven't even given you're A level exams but have been promoted to Harvard University, and if you don't work hard you'll probably be thrown out of university in the first year. So you need to work harder now in order live up to the responsibility of maintaining your position in Harvard.

Every *naymat* (blessing) and every reward you get is actually a responsibility.

Slide 28:

What does that mean? Every time you get something nice how should you react? Should you not celebrate at all and keep very silent and serious?

Student: We can share the good news with our loved ones.

Teacher: Absolutely. Of course you can tell your family and celebrate. But don't forget Allah (swt) and remember that it could not have been done without Him and that it is Allah (swt) Who makes our world go around.

Slides 29-30:

Let's discuss the same example with some changes. Suppose you give your O level exams and study for them with a friend. However, you don't get very good grades and get mostly Bs, Cs and Ds. How will you react now?

Student: I'd be very sad and disappointed.

Student: I might get angry.

Teacher: Right. You may also jump to conclusions. You might blame your friend for disturbing you when the two of you were studying together. But that's not the right way to react, is it? Like you said, you might feel embarrassed, you might feel humiliated and you'll feel depressed. You might wonder why something like this has happened to you.

Slide 31:

Allah (swt) has said, "When we tried him by straitening his mean of life he says my Lord has humiliated me." (Surah Al-Fajr 89: Verse 16)

Whenever we experience something bad we feel bad towards Allah (swt) as well and question why He has put us through such an experience. And Allah (swt) knows that we think like this.

That's what the *ayat* is saying: whenever we come across a hardship we feel that Allah (swt) has humiliated us.

Slide 32:

In another *ayat*, Allah (swt) says, "Verily with the hardships there is relief verily with the hardships there is relief." (Surah Ash-Sharh 94: Verses 5-6)

You need to understand that all the hardships you go through improve you; they can make you into better a person if you learn to control your reactions.

Slide 33:

Allah (swt) also says, "O you who believe seek help with patience, perseverance and prayer, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2: Verse 153)

So, every one of us, like the man in the story you just listened to, will go through ups and downs. How should we react when we are going through a down?

Student: We should not blame others.

Absolutely. Firstly, we should not blame anyone else, and we should not blame Allah (swt) either. Allah (swt) is telling us to be patient and get on with life. Allah (swt) is giving us another tool to deal with our hardships as well; can anybody guess what that is?

Student: Praying.

Teacher: Yes, we need to pray to Allah (swt), keep saying our *salah* (prayers), and we should invoke Him through *salah* and *du'as* (prayer).

Slide 34:

The Messenger (pbuh) of Allah (swt) once said, "Shall I not teach you words to say whenever you are afflicted with something, say *Allahu Rabbi La Shareekalak* (My Rabb is Allah, He has no partners)."[Abu Dawud]

Whenever you experience a hardship and you feel that you are going through a bad time, read this *du'a*, "*Allahu Rabbi La Shareekalak*".

So, when we are depressed how should we react?

Slide 35:

Firstly, we should not blame Allah (swt). We should not throw tantrums. And we should remember that whatever is happening is temporary. Whatever bad time we're going through is just a phase which is going to pass and some good might come out of it. That is what Allah (swt)

is telling us in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *ayats* of Surah Ash-Sharh: after every hardship there is relief just like there is dawn after every night; it's the same principle.

We also need to get in the habit of doing *sadaqah*, in both the good times and the bad times. And we should continue to strive and work hard instead of giving up. Keep working on the goals that you have set for yourself; it doesn't matter if you come across a setback; don't lose your focus and keep working.

Slide 36:

In Surah Al-Mulk Allah (swt) says, "Who has created death and life that He may test you which of you are best in deeds and He is the Al-Mighty the Oft-Forgiving." (Surah Al-Mulk 67: Verse 2)

That is why we have been blessed with life; it is a test. Allah (swt) has given us this life to test us. He wants to see whether we follow His commands or whether we follow our own wishes. When He gives us a blessing, He wants to see what our reaction is. When He gives us hardships He wants to see how we react. So remember that Allah (swt) is watching you when you experience some change. He wants to see what you are going to do.

Slide 37:

The Messenger (pbuh) of Allah (swt) said, "Seek out that which benefits you, seek help only from Allah and never say you can't do it, if any adversity comes to you don't say if I had acted in such and such way it would have been such and such but instead say Allah has decreed it and what He willed He has done for verily the word 'IF' opens the way for the work of Satan." [Muslim]

If something bad happens and you don't like what is going on, don't keep dwelling on it. Don't stop the good work you were doing and don't focus on the bad thing and don't think about how things could have gone differently; what is done is done and it is done only because Allah (swt) has written in His tablet that this thing will be done. Get over it and get on with life. Don't dwell on the mistakes you have made, but you also need to learn from the experience so you don't repeat the mistakes you've made; you should take lessons from the misfortunes you experience. Learn from your mistakes and just move on, don't linger on those bad experiences.

Slides 38-41:

Let's talk about somebody we all know: Princess Diana. She was a very famous lady, wasn't she? She seemed to have everything, right? She was beautiful, she was born in Europe, which is a very nice place, she had blue eyes, she was blond, she had beautiful parents and she went to very good schools. She had so much already, and then what happened? She met the prince of her dreams and they got engaged. The ring was white gold with an oval sapphire in the middle and fourteen diamonds. An ideal engagement ring. And then she also had a dream wedding with the



man of her dreams. And then she even had sons. But we all know what happened later, right? A lot of things were reported in the newspapers and I don't want to repeat all of it because we all know what happened. Her marriage broke down and she started indulging in drug abuse amongst other things.

*Alhamdulillah*, being Muslims, we have been given certain tools by Allah (swt). That is what we need to realize. Ups and downs come in everyone's lives but we need to learn to handle them. If we don't learn to handle them, our lives can start going down and never come back up. You start indulging in bad habits, and you start to feel you that have lost control of your life. But you never had control of your life to begin with; you are just living the life that Allah (swt) has marked out for you. So you need to learn to go with the flow. There will be ups and downs but you need to get through them.

Slides 42-44:

I'll read out a very nice poem for you:

^  
I can be used to achieve  
success in this world and the next  
or  
eternal punishment.

I can be used  
for standing up for the truth and what is just  
or  
accepting falsehood.

I can be used to know  
that this world is temporary and live as a traveler  
or  
treat it as if this world is permanent and make it my home.

I can be used  
to donate to the needy and good causes  
or  
gather wealth and not help others.

I can be used to  
respect and honor parents  
or  
disrespect and disregard them.

I can be used to  
spread the light of Islam  
or  
hide it away from the world.

I can be used to  
repent from sins and strive to be righteous  
or  
continue sinning and not repenting.

I can be used to  
search and follow the divine guidance  
or  
live in a state of heedlessness.

I can be used to  
further increase my knowledge of Islam  
or  
remain in ignorance.

I can be used to  
enjoin the good and forbid the evil  
or  
enjoin the evil and forbid the good.

I can be used to  
sit with the righteous and pious people  
or  
sit with the corrupt and wicked people.

I can be used to  
Control your soul's evil desires  
or  
be a slave to your own soul.

I can be used to  
acknowledge and obey the Creator  
or  
ignore and disobey the Creator.

I can be used to  
follow the guidance sent from above the seven heavens  
or  
the dark steps of *shaitan*.

What am I?

Slide 45:

The answer is: life. How will you use your life? It all depends on how we plan to use our life. We need to see how we will achieve the goals that we set for ourselves.

Slide 46:

Okay let's go over what we have learnt today:

- Life is cyclic and comes in fragments.
- Good times don't last forever and are a test.
- Bad times don't last forever and are a test.
- Only Allah (swt) can see the bigger picture. We don't know what will follow.
- We need to develop the habit of giving *sadaqah* at all times; whenever something good happens and whenever something bad happens.
- We need to control our reactions to earn rewards in the Hereafter. What are the benefits of controlling our reactions?

Student: Allah (swt) will see that we are not reacting.

Yes, *alhamdulillah*.

Slide 47:

Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Baqarah, "And certainly we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits. But give glad tidings to *as-saabireen* (patient people)." (Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 155)

Allah (swt) has told us that he's going to test us and the test is not going to be easy. You may be tested with somebody's death, you may be tested with not having any food; you'll be tested with difficult things and these tests are definitely coming, Allah (swt) has promised it, so you need to be patient because the patient ones will be rewarded; they are the only ones who will be rewarded.

Slide 48:

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, no believer is stricken with fatigue, exhaustion, worry or grief but Allah will forgive him for some of his sins thereby-even a thorn which pricks him." [Ahmad]

So remember that Allah (swt) will be forgiving some of your sins even if you experience a minor hardship. Be glad that you are experiencing the hardship and don't forget how important it is to learn from your mistakes.

Slide 49:

**Note to teacher:** Play audio

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbullzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun  
'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*