

MODULE 2

Class Title: The Tauba Thing

Aim of the lesson: learning the etiquettes of asking for forgiveness from Allah (swt)

Category: Worship

Lesson Format: Activity & Power point presentation with discussion

Handout: in folder

Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli*

(Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

Slides 1 – 2:

How are you all? Good, good*Alhamdullilah*

Today I would like you to do some writing for me. I hope you like to write stories. Is there anybody here who likes to write stories?

(Several students raise their hands.)

OK, *Alhamdullilah*. Quite a few of you. That is good. Alright, let's divide you into groups. I will be giving you a scenario as there are a few points that I want you to incorporate in that story. You can change the rest or add stuff. If you want to do something for example you can change the name of the girl but the main points must be there. This is the scenario:

Slides 3 – 4:

The name of the girl is Zohra ...

She misbehaves in school with her teacher...

Quarrels with her friends

Comes home and shouts at her mother..

Goes off to sleep and dies.

Okay. Alright. These are some points. Hmm maybe you can make her come alive after a little while, that is up to you. Let us see what you come up with.

I will divide you into groups of 4.

Alright. Groups, sit in circles. I have some pencils in case anybody needs them. You have just ten minutes for this.

Student: We only have to make one story?

Student 2: Does it need a name?

Teacher: Yes, just one story and yes, do give your story a title. You should write 75 to 100 words.

(Students working on the assignment)

Teacher: Alright, is anyone done? Try ending your stories. Time is almost up. The story must have an end!

Teacher: Okay, time is up now. *Alhamdulillah!* How about you? Just finishing? Sana, are you ready? What about you, is your group done? Okay, we will start with your group since you are ready. I want you to read your story, please.

Slide 5:

[There were 4 groups in the class. Each group read out its story and the teacher also asked each group to tell the moral of their story. Only one story has been added to this transcript as a sample.]

(Student reading story).....The day was not going well. First of all, I found myself screaming at my class teacher for giving me detention. Later I had an argument with my best friend and then came home screaming at my mom for not ordering pizza for lunch. A bad headache also started developing, so I decided to sleep early. I soon fell asleep. I had a dream that changed my perception of life and that would always be vivid in my mind. I dreamt that I was in a huge room and there was a big screen on one wall. I was wondering as to where I am.

The room was bare and cold. There was no window, no door. I kept wondering how I got in it. Then all of a sudden everything started shaking and the screen came on. I saw myself as a small child playing outside in my garden and my mother was there with me. I had lots of candies and was eating them constantly though my mother was trying to get me to stop. I started throwing tantrums and finally my mom left me to myself and I sat and finished all the candies. Then another scene, I was older and this time I was engaged in an argument with my father who was trying me to convince me to wear the hijab but I was being difficult. I had reasons and reasons for not being able to do it. Then another scene, I realized it was my own life unfolding right in front of me. But it was so horrible, even the smallest wrong I had done was there to see. For the first time I could see where I was wrong. I could see all the people I had hurt and all the defiance and disobedience I had shown to my parents and elders.

It was horrible. I was just trying to get over the shock of all this recording when I saw that the walls of the room started turning red and the temperature was rising. It was getting hotter and hotter. Then the redness of the walls turned into fire. I started screaming. I was screaming at the top of my voice and something was shaking me.

I was terrified. I screamed more and the shaking also increased. Then I opened my eyes and found that my mother was shaking me as I was screaming in my sleep..I woke up and was very thankful to be alive. I hugged my mom and realized that I needed to be proactive and not reactive ...so that I don't wrong my close ones and gather bad deeds. I need to be careful of my attitude and my behavior. I need to turn a new leaf because I can die anytime.

Slide 6:

Teacher: Okay, *masha'Allah*, good story. So what would you say is the moral of the story?

Student: You never realize or know that you are doing something bad till it is too late.

Teacher: Because you can die at any time. You might not get a chance to say sorry. If you do something bad, you might be regretting it in the grave or on the Day of Judgment. If you regret when alive you can do something about it, like apologize, make amends etc, but if you die soon then after death, you can't do anything.

Sometimes events occur in a chain; one thing goes wrong and it leads to a chain reaction. We get into a reactive mode just because of one bad thing. We get into a reactive mode and then we react automatically and negatively to everything that happens. Does that not happen? So yes, one day can make all the difference. What we need to think about is how much time do we have in this world and how am I using that time?

The most important thing to realize is that these small things, do we consider them sins? Do we consider them as something really, really bad that we need to stay away from? When something goes wrong, do we realize that we have sinned? Most of the time, I don't really think so. To be very honest, we often rationalize away our actions. What do we say to ourselves? What is the harm? What did I do wrong? Everyone does this.

If I ask you, what were the things that this girl did wrong, what would you say? She misbehaved, she was fighting Okay and? She screamed at her mother alright. She was disrespectful, obnoxious. Okay alright so what are these things? All these things that you are relating, what are these things? These are bad attitudes? Right? Are they sins? Are they sins?

Slide 7:

What is a sin?

Student: Something Allah (swt) has told us not to do.

Something that Allah (swt) does not like and does not want us to do or to be. So if these attitudes or actions are there in our routines, even if it is only at times, and since we don't know when we are going to die, it is important to consider these bad habits which lead to sins. Don't we talk about good deeds and bad deeds?

Don't we discuss what are good deeds and bad deeds? These actions are part of the bad deeds that we talk about. For you and me, these are the bad deeds that crop up in our lives: screaming at our siblings, maybe not sharing with them; small, small things that we don't really think about.

We don't really think about those things because we figure, what is the harm in these small things? That is our attitude towards these things and we don't realize that these things are actually sins; these are actually things that Allah (swt) does not like. We consider them small sins and we think, "Oh it is so small, so trivial. Allah (swt) is not going to catch me on this one. He is not going to scold me because of this on the Day of Judgment! Just because I screamed at my little one, why would Allah (swt) be mean to me?"

That is our perspective at times. We also tend to think that we have a lot of time, the 'I-am-going-to-change-my-ways-when-I-grow-up attitude'. When I am not old enough, when I am a grandmother maybe? Do these thoughts cross our minds? Sometimes, we do not want to change. We say, "Okay, I have a lot of time, I am still young, I will change but for now let me just enjoy my life, let me just have fun, let me show my attitude", just so we can avoid any unpleasant changes in our behavior.

Another typical reaction: What difference does it make? So what? So what if I am like this, so what? These are the attitudes that we really, really need to think about, OK? And the most important thing to think about is that we don't know how much time we have.

Slide 8:

Now that we have talked about our attitudes towards sin, let us talk about the attitudes of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) towards sin. There was a companion, Anas (ra) who said:

"You imagine certain sins to be more insignificant than a straw. But, at the time of the Prophet (pbuh) we used to count them among those that can destroy a man."

(Bukhari Volume 8: Book 76: Hadith 499)

You know these small things, these itchy-bitsy sins that we consider as very trivial. We think that this is not going to hurt me but unfortunately, these trivial things sometimes become our habit and that is the start of a slippery slope to destruction. That is what the companion of the Prophet (pbuh) was warning of.

These trivial things are there and people like us can fall prey to them without realizing the consequences. In his time, he (Anas (ra)) was talking to somebody who was not a companion of

the Prophet (pbuh) and he was telling him that you don't really consider these bad things to be a sin. You just consider them to be very trivial. You consider them no more than bits of straw but actually these are sins that can destroy you.

Also, like somebody said, these sins make you a very unlikable person. Nobody really likes such people. Even if you are somebody that people do like but you have some unpleasant habits, you really need to think about them. Even if there is just one habit that people don't really like, we need to think about that habit, Okay?

A believer treats a sin as if it is a mountain over his head that may fall on him any moment. Whereas a regular violator looks at them as a fly that perked on his nose and he waived it away with his hand."

(Bukhari Volume 8: Book 75: Hadith 320)

Slide 9:

Do you understand this? This is the attitude that 'normal' people today have towards small sins.

There is another hadith of Rasool Allah (pbuh) which tells us:

“Beware of minor sins for they add on until they destroy the man.” (Reported by Ahmad)

Small sins, because we don't really think about them as sins, just keep on gathering; keep on adding and collecting, lots and lots of them till they destroy us. They destroy the personality of the person.

Slide 10:

My advice is that do not look at the sins as if they are small or big. Look at Him in whose defiance you are committing them. The reason why we try to be good is to please Allah (swt). He is the One Who has ordered us to be good. He is the One Who wants us to be good. He is the One Who has created us '*ahasan u taqweem*' i.e. in the best of shapes, the best of moulds, if you remember from Surah At Teen. He has put a lot of potential, a lot of good in us and He expects us to be good. He wants us to be good so we need to live up to His expectations.

Slides 11- 12:

A scholar, Ibn e Qayyim, quoted a lot of effects that things can have on us.

For example, he states that when you do a lot of sins then your ability to gain knowledge reduces, the feelings in your heart become constrained, your heart does not feel good or healthy and your ordinary affairs become very difficult; it becomes difficult to live a daily, routine life. Have you ever seen people with depression and I am not talking about people with certain

medical problems but generally? You will notice that people with such lives are more prone to depression. Another common side effect: sins slow you down. People who are generally involved in sins are very slow people. There is a long list of effects that sins have on our daily lives.

Slide 13

After doing something wrong, how do you feel? What is the feeling that you get?

Student: Guilty.

Teacher: Okay, guilty. If I ask you to describe that guilt, what would you say?

Student: Depression.

Student 2: You want to fix it.

Student 3: Horrible.

Teacher: You feel like fixing it, Okay. You feel horrible, absolutely.

Student: remorseful

Student: Angry.

Student 4: Regretful.

Teacher: The most important thing is that you should feel really, really remorseful. The feeling should be that I have done something so wrong that how can Allah (swt) forgive me?

I have really, really, really, really done something bad and now, how will Allah (swt) forgive me? What I have done is just unimaginable! It is the pits, the worst. That feeling has to be there and at the same time, you also need to remember that Allah (swt) is very Merciful. He does forgive our sins when we sincerely regret them and beg His forgiveness. In fact, He is the only One Who can forgive our sins so you see, both these feelings have to be there so that we can ask for repentance.

Slides 14 - 15:

Repentance is the one thing that can wipe away our sins, whether big or small. Whenever we do something wrong, we need to turn to Allah (swt) and ask for His mercy.

In the Qur'an it is mentioned:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say: " O My Slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Surah Az Zumer 39: Verse 53)."

Allah (swt) is very Merciful. He is the only One who can forgive all our sins.

Another *hadith* says,

“Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than one of you would be who suddenly finds his camel laden with supplies after losing it in a barren land.” (Bukhari)

If somebody has a camel with a lot of stuff on it and the camel gets lost in the desert and all of a sudden, unexpectedly, he finds the camel! Imagine the happiness he will be feeling at that point. So how happy does Allah (swt) feel when somebody turns to Him and asks for forgiveness? Allah (swt) feels that one of His slaves has come back to Him after doing something wrong, after doing what He did not want Him to do.

Slide 16:

Another *hadith* tells us,

“O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you what you have done and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you there then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, if you were to come to me with sins nearly as big as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as big as it.” (Tirmidhi)

This *hadith* tells us that the one thing that we must not indulge in is *shirk* (associating partners with Allah (swt)). If somebody does not do *shirk* and that person asks for forgiveness, no matter how many sins he has done, Allah (swt) will forgive him but anybody who indulges in *shirk*, his sins will not be forgiven.

Slide 17:

Alright, moving on to the importance of repentance:

Repentance is the most noble and beloved form of obedience in the eyes of Allah (swt). This is something very important. Allah (swt) loves it when people repent. He loves you even when you sin but much more so when you repent.

Isn't that amazing? Allah (swt) does not want us to sin but He knows that we will do wrong things. There will be times when we slip and He knows it but He wants us to turn back to Him so anyone who turns back to Allah (swt), he reaches the status of being amongst the beloveds through his repentance. Allah (swt) loves it when people repent to Him.

Repentance brings about humbleness and a sense of helplessness to the only Creator, Allah (swt) and that is not easily acquired through other forms of worship. When you do your *salah* (ritual prayer) or your fasts, you do not feel remorseful about it. Do you feel remorseful? No.

You just do your *salah*, it is a routine thing that you do. You don't feel remorse and you do not feel really humble. Often you just do it in your routine. But when you turn to Allah (swt) for repentance, you are asking for His forgiveness and that brings a feeling of humbleness inside. That humility is the feeling that Allah (swt) loves.

Repentance breeds good deeds. Because when you are sorry for something then you try to amend, you try to make changes and do more good. On the other extreme, sinning without repentance can cause deprivation of obedience all together.

You see, if anybody indulges in sins and does not repent then Allah (swt) takes away the ability of obedience from that person. That person then is not capable of obedience to Allah (swt) and the most interesting thing is that Allah (swt) changes that person's bad deeds into good deeds when that person sincerely repents to him.

Slides 18:

Except those who repent, have faith and good deeds, those Allah will change their sins for good deeds. Certainly Allah is Most Forgiving and Merciful."

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَحِيمًا

(Surah Al Furqan 25: Verse 70).

Allah (swt) is so Merciful that when somebody repents, He changes that person's bad deeds into good deeds. Isn't that amazing? Your bad deeds get changed into good deeds just because you sincerely said sorry to Allah (swt) because that is how much He loves us.

Slide 19:

So what is the process of repentance, since we have learned that weakness is in us? We are weak human beings, we do things wrong, so how do we go about seeking repentance for it?

First of all, stop the sin for the sake of Allah (swt) only. Let us suppose that there is a thief and he wants to steal something. He goes into the house and cannot open the safe. That is the reason he could not steal whatever he wanted to so that is not repentance. We cannot say that he stopped from doing the wrong thing for Allah (swt).

If somebody stops drinking alcohol because they have just found out that it is not good for their health, that is the reason why they stopped drinking alcohol. Again, this is not repentance because it is not for Allah (swt). If you give up a disliked action only to get the pleasure of Allah (swt) then it is true repentance.

Only true repentance causes the feeling that we just talked about i.e. regretting deeply and truly and thinking that I have really done something wrong and then quickly turning to Allah (swt) for forgiveness because if you delay, a lot of times, the feeling just passes away.

Then you think, 'Okay what I did was just a small thing. No big deal.' So it is very important that you ask for forgiveness immediately and make a strong intention to never return to that same sin.

This will involve certain other steps as well:

First thing is, move away from the place where the sin was committed. This is very important. Wherever you have done something wrong, it is better that you remove yourself from that place so that you can think clearly. Also move away from the people who were around you at the time of sin.

Once they find out something bad about you sometimes people just stick to it and they just label you so it is better to move away from that place. Abandon the company of those who helped or encouraged you in that sin. Sometimes there are other people who help you to do wrong things.

The second thing is: destruction of those things and articles that help in committing that sin. Maybe somebody listens to a lot of music and to escape that sin, that person needs to get rid of the CD player or iPod that they are using to listen to the music. Yes?

Student: What happens to the sins that you used to do?

Teacher: It will be counted as a sin. What is done will be there in the records. It has not been moved

Student: but if you have stopped?

Teacher: If you have stopped, it would not be written further. Do you understand? Every moment, the angels are writing everything that we are doing. Right now they are writing what we are doing. Okay, so you have stopped the sin so they have stopped writing that sin but what you did in the past is there in that record. However, when you ask for forgiveness it gets erased. Do you understand? Yes?

Student: If you intentionally do a sin will it be forgiven?

Teacher: Yes, once you have asked for forgiveness very sincerely then it will be removed.

Slide 20:

The repenting person should remember three facts:

1. Whatever we do wrong, we are going to get some punishment for it
2. How weak a person is when committing such sins
3. Whatever we do wrong is a personal weakness inside us.

Slide 21:

Two very important things: what is the time for repentance? Whenever we do something wrong, the angel on our left is the one who records the bad deed and he waits for six hours before he writes it down.

(Reported by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer and al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Eemaan (The Branches of Faith); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheehah, 1209))

He is waiting that maybe we will say sorry, maybe we will say Allah (swt) please forgive me. If we do that than he does not write the deed but if we don't do that then he records the deed.

Student: if you ask the person for forgiveness?

Teacher: From the person you have done wrong? *Alhamdulillah*, absolutely you need to do that but it is said that having done that even then you have to say sorry, do *astaghfar* to Allah (swt).

The second important thing is that before you die, you have to say sorry for your sins, alright?

Slides 22 - 23:

“Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately and rejoice for no one's good deeds will put him in Paradise.” The companions asked, “not even you oh Messenger of Allah?” He replied, “not even me unless Allah bestows His Mercy on me.” (Bukhari)

The important thing to realize here is that we have to keep on doing good deeds but we also need to remember that actually our salvation in the Hereafter does not really depend on our good deeds.

There may be many good deeds in our Record, but it is actually the Mercy of Allah (swt) that will get us into *jannah* (Heaven). It is because of that only so basically we need our faith, we need our good deeds but most importantly we have to keep our hope that Allah (swt) is so Merciful that He will forgive me and send me to *Jannah insha'Allah Ta'llah*. Okay?

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillah Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*