

MODULE 2

Class Title: Surah Al-‘Asr

Aim of the lesson: To understand the message of the *surah*

Category: Scripture

Lesson Format: Power point presentation with discussion

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu ‘alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Ta’awwudh*) *A ‘oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du’a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul ‘uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* [Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28]

Slide 1:

Today we will look at Surah Al-‘Asr in detail; how many of you know it by heart? I advise you all to take out time and try and memorize it if you don’t already know it; this is a good opportunity because we will try and understand and study the *surah* and this will help you to memorize it *inshaAllah*.

Slides 2 - 5:

This is one of the earliest *surahs* of the Qur-an, so do you think it is a *Makki* or a *Madani surah*? That’s right, it’s a *Makki surah*. It is also one of the shortest *surahs* of the Qur-an. There are just three *ayaat* in it.

It is also very simple and easy to understand but yet there is a lot of depth in it. That’s the beauty of this *surah*, and that’s why I love talking about it. You can talk about it on any level; you can talk about it to adults as much as you can talk to the youth about it.

There are basically four fundamental points in this *surah*; four things that Allah (swt) talks about - four qualities that a human being must, not just should, have. We must have these four qualities; must develop them in ourselves, if we want to focus on our life in the Hereafter.

Slide 6:

Surah Al-‘Asr. *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*, this is the first *ayah* and I’ll tell you the translations along with the *ayaat*; *Wal ‘Asr*, By the passage of time. *Innal insaana lafee khusr*. Indeed mankind is surely in loss. This is the second *ayah*. And the third is slightly longer, *illa* Except, *alladheena amanu*; Those who believed. Focus on the word ‘Believe’, *wa ‘amilus salehaat*; And did righteous deeds. Focus on the words ‘Righteous Deeds’, *wa tawa sau bil haqq*; And they directed each other to the truth. Focus on directing each other to truth, and then finally, *wa tawa sau bis sabr*; And directed each other to patience.

What are the four traits Allah (swt) wants us to develop? These are the four; the ones I have underlined. Apparently it looks like a very simple *surah* and yes it is very simple if you understand it. It's not rocket science but there is a lot of depth in it and we will cover a large portion of it in this module, *inshaAllah*. The rest will be covered in the other module *inshaAllah*.

Slide 7:

This *surah* is said to be enough for mankind's guidance (Imam Ash-Shafi'ee) . When I talk about guidance what comes to your mind? Guidance towards Islam and towards Allah (swt); guidance for our salvation. Some scholars have said that if you can just internalize one *surah* from the whole Qur-an; understand it in detail and try and apply what Allah (swt) talks about in one *surah*, this could be enough for your salvation.

Essentially there are four things that you and I must develop - this is not optional - that is one thing you must remember while doing this *surah*; it's not that Allah (swt) is suggesting four things; these are the things that Allah (swt) says we must develop. Apparently it seems like it's not a big deal; belief, righteous deeds, directing each other to truth, directing each other to patience; not a big deal at all, so I'm saved.

Slides 8 – 16:

However, it's not really as simple as that.

We have a criterion of success and failure; if I asked you what your criterion for success is, what's the first thing that comes to your mind? Forget about what's right or wrong, what's the first thing that comes to your mind? Forget that you are sitting at Perceptions, what's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say 'Success'?

When you talk about the worldly criterion of success, wealth comes to mind, property, house, status, honour, fame, respect and power; and all but a few run after these. There's a huge rat race going on in this world for this kind of success because this is it for us. If I have this, I'm good. Some of you feel that good grades in exams and wealth is enough.

Slides 17 - 22:

But Surah Al-'Asr tells us something very different, at a tangent to what we generally think. The criterion of mankind's success and failure is - number one, his belief. Number two, it is doing righteous deeds. Number three, directing each other to truth and number four, directing each other to patience.

Slides 23 - 25:

Now we will talk about these in detail.

These are the four things that are the criteria of success and failure according to Allah (swt). A person who doesn't possess these qualities is a failure. He's fallen on his face if he even has three out of these four qualities that Allah (swt) talks about, though he might be a billionaire, having a high status, power, kinship; he might be an A+ student, might be having everything and a good family life and all these things that we talked about, but if he doesn't have all these four or any one of these four things he is a serious failure in the eyes of Allah (swt).

The truly successful person on the other hand, might be penniless, hopeless, friendless, unknown, dishonoured and of course might be starving and still be successful; or he might not be. Poverty or richness or wealth in this world have absolutely nothing to do with the kind of things that are required for a person to be successful in the eyes of Allah (swt). The criteria we have for success in this world is good for nothing as far as Allah (swt) is concerned. We need to change our perspective; and that's the reason we are here at Perceptions.

This is like a temporary joy that you have in your life. If you feel that fame, good marks and good family are success, you are very short sighted; yes these are joys of life and we must thank Allah (swt) for them, but they are not the criteria for actual success; we need to change the definition of success. The problem is that our definition of success is very short term. For us success is something that will happen in the near future; but that is not the actual success and obviously the definition we have of failure is also very short term. It is really sad to get bad marks, it's really sad to not have a good family life, it is really sad to crave for something; if you don't have money, life does become difficult. But that should not be the criteria of your success. These are very temporary milestones in life and using the word 'Success' and 'Failure' for these is really not a good idea. Let's start *Surah Al- 'Asr* and we will get to that point again.

Slides 26 - 28:

Al- 'Asr; by the passage of time.

Allah (swt) has not merely stated the truth but he has taken an oath of '*asr*. What is '*asr*? '*Asr* is the time when we offer our *salah*. Another meaning of '*asr* is the time that passes quickly and that applies to our *salah* as well; the time for '*asr salah* is very short and we are usually so busy at that time that if we don't offer it immediately then it gets delayed and we start rushing because there is hardly any time left. The '*asr* prayer is very important. There is a *hadith* "Whoever misses the 'Asr prayer (intentionally) then it is as if he lost his family and property." (Bukhari) Why is the '*asr* time so important? All *salahs* are important; you can't miss *Fajr* or *Zuhr*, but the loss that you incur by missing '*asr*, is tremendously more. One of the reasons that the scholars give is because this is near the end of the day and you are kids right now, but when you grow up you will see that '*asr* is the time when people are winding up their work and they are in a rush to go home. Even in olden times, the Arabs used to have these markets and at '*asr* time they packed up everything because once the night fell it became dangerous. So they were in a rush at the time

of 'asr and what happens when you are in a rush? What's the first thing that gets neglected? Your *salah* gets neglected. The meaning of this is, "Time, bear witness to that."

Slides 29 - 33:

Next Allah (swt) says, *Innal insaana lafee khusr*, indeed mankind is in loss.

Everybody is in loss. When Allah (swt) uses the word mankind, He is referring to you and me. Everybody is in loss. This is not a monetary loss; a few millions or billions. What are we talking about? Complete destruction. This word *khusr*, means complete destruction. Nothing left. Sometimes we face a loss, where part of that thing is saved - e.g. milk gets spilt, some remains in the glass. But here, this word *khusr* tells you that everything is gone. That's the meaning embedded in the word *khusr*.

What is complete destruction? What comes to mind? It could be problems in this world like death, buildings falling, illnesses, loved ones dying, anything that would make you sad or unhappy. However, that's just a part of it. Along with this complete destruction is the Hell in the Hereafter. It's a combination of miseries in this world and Hell in the Hereafter. That's complete destruction.

Let's say somebody is having a good time in this world and he ends up in the Hell fire; one might feel that at least he had a good time here. Let's say there's another person who's having a seriously troublesome life in this world but he ends up in Paradise. He had to bear some kind of problems in this world. Then there's another person who is absolutely happy here, *Alhamdulillah* and he went to Paradise. Finally, there's a person who was very miserable in this world and then he ended up in the Hell fire as well! This is that lose - lose situation when Allah (swt) is saying the human being is in complete destruction; having a pathetic life here and then ending up in the Hellfire. None of us would want that because most of the people we see here are having a good time; we are not supposed to be judgmental but we see people disobeying Allah (swt) but nevertheless they are apparently having a good time in this world. But Allah (swt) is saying no, you might feel that you are having a good time but it's like a complete loss for you in this world because this enjoyment from sins may bring temporary joy but in most cases the inner peace is absent and you are going to end up in the Hell fire That's a very powerful statement and Allah (swt) took the oath of 'Time'; 'asr, which is such an important part of the day. This sentence should take away my sleep, all my moments of relaxation in this world.

Slides 34:

But then Allah (swt) gives exceptions - *illal ladheena* - except those who. If I say that everybody is here except for these six students, what is the exception; you all or the ones who didn't come? Is exception the majority or minority? Exceptions are always in minority. So when Allah (swt) says except for the ones who have these qualities, how many have these qualities? Will they be the minority in this world or majority? Allah (swt) is saying that if you need to save yourself,

you need to have these qualities. By the way, very few people will end up having these qualities. He's not saying you can't have these qualities; if you want them, you will have to make the effort and it will be a struggle in this world.

Slides 35 -37:

Even one of these missing in your life can cause destruction, because Allah (swt) said that except for the ones who believed and did righteous deeds and helped each other to truth and enjoined each other to patience. If I say today we have burgers and cupcakes and juice and ice cream, is it like all four things? Yes. If I say you can go out and have a burger or juice or a cup cake or ice cream, what does that mean? It means you can have any one of them.

So here Allah (swt) says *illal ladheena aamanu*, except those who believed. Now let's talk about all these four things in detail and we have to keep assessing ourselves to see if we fall in this category or not. The first is those who believe. Believe in what? We all know we need to believe in Allah, the Prophets, life after death, the Day of Judgement, rewards and punishments, Hell and *Jannah*. The question I need to ask myself now is, "Do I have complete faith in all these?" And you say, "Hmm, thank God I'm through." The first exception is what *Alhamdulillah* all of us have.

Slides 38 - 39:

But let's see the second one; *wa 'amilus salehaat*; And did righteous deeds. Are all your deeds righteous? How many of us can say, "Thank God I have this second quality too.?" If not, then there is a problem not just in righteous deeds but also in the first one, in *imaan*. The first two are inter-connected; your *imaan* and your righteous deeds. *Imaan* is something that we can't see; it's hidden. It's very difficult to gauge if we have *imaan* or not. But righteous deeds are right in front; I can see what you are doing and you can see what you are doing too. So it's very easy for us to gauge if we are doing righteous deeds or not. Belief and righteous deeds are inter-connected. Your deeds actually indicate your belief.

Slides 40 - 43:

Let me give you a couple of examples; look at this image; he's doing a deed. Can you guess his belief just by looking at his deed? I don't want to be judgmental and I don't want you all to be judgmental about other people but I need to focus on myself. If you do something that is not allowed by Allah (swt) and then you say that you have *imaan*, your deeds are contradicting your claim and that is exactly what's happening in this image. We won't judge people, but for ourselves we have to see what we do with our lives and based on that if I say I still believe in Allah (swt) and I'm doing things that displease Him, this is a sign of weak *imaan*. *Imaan* is visible through our deeds. If your deeds are not in line with your claim then your claim is nothing more than a mere claim. You might keep saying that you have *imaan* but in reality a

claim without action is hollow. I'm not going to be judged by what I **claim** on the Day of Judgement, I will be judged by my actions.

To check if my *imaan* is strong or not I have to see my deeds;. What do you think will happen to such a person on the Day of Judgement? Do you think Allah (swt) will say, at least you had *imaan*, doesn't matter if you went to these parties, doesn't matter if you consumed alcohol, or if you had boyfriends. Doesn't matter but at least you had *imaan*; it would be very unfair to a person who is actually doing righteous deeds. Do you agree with me? Having said that, I will reiterate that you are not supposed to judge other people, this is only to assess ourselves. I have to make sure that I am of those exceptions; I need to save myself and make sure that I don't fall in the category of *khusr*; people who are in complete destruction.

What about her? Again, we are not supposed to judge, but if this were a picture of you, what would you realize about yourself, after seeing this picture? You would realize that you might be claiming that you're a Muslim, that you have belief in Allah (swt), but from Allah's (swt) eyes how do you think you will be gauged?

Here, killing people; this man might claim that he has *imaan* too, but do you think Allah (swt) will be happy with him if he is killing innocent people on the street? So *imaan* is not something that you can merely claim. We need to focus on ourselves, on our actions and gauge whether we have *imaan* or not.

Slides 44 - 48:

There are two types of Muslims in this world, one is those who are Muslims by name; they call themselves Muslims but they are not practicing Muslims. They claim they have *imaan* but their deeds don't show that they are Muslims. The other category are Muslims by deeds, and they are practicing Muslims; true Muslims in Allah's (swt) books. Your deeds indicate your identity. We believe that Allah (swt) exists, He's All Seeing, All Hearing, All Knowing, He will take full account of all our deeds, will punish and reward us; if yes then how can we dare to do what He doesn't allow? How can I have the audacity to say that I still have *imaan*? Slides 49 - 56:

Coming to the last two attributes; *wa tawa sau bil haqq*; and they direct each other to truth. This means teaching and stopping people from committing sins. What is the last trait? *Wa tawa sau bis sabr*; and they direct each other to patience. Just as *imaan* and actions go hand in hand, these last two traits are also very connected to each other. No matter how people react when you tell them that what they are doing is not right, you have to remain steadfast. You display *sabr* and patience because advice is usually disliked by people. You need to remain persistent. It's not a one-time thing that you need to do, you need to keep telling them. You need to tell them with a lot of wisdom and by the way this is not an option that is given to you, you have to do it if you see somebody doing something wrong.

The third quality was *wa tawa sau bil haqq*, you go and very politely correct them and this doesn't mean that you go and start beating that person; how did you dare to not offer your 'asr, how dare you tell lies, etc. You have to be very diplomatic and loving in directing other people to truth. If they frown and they are curt with you, then you must remember that this is a test of your patience.

Slides 57 - 64:

We must understand that we get influenced by our environment - by the type of people we are surrounded with; and we also influence them. You might be a single person who is trying to do good deeds, but you will create some kind of ripple effect around yourself. One or two people will get influenced by what you are doing, whether they are good or bad things. We affect other people and other people affect us too. An example of this is the coolness of ice; if there's a glass of water and you drop an ice cube in it, it will become cold and similarly heat and fire make things warmer. So everything has an effect on its surroundings and we have an effect on people around us as they have an effect on us. I can't lead an independent life and say that religion is a personal thing, it's never a personal thing, and you have to keep changing the environment around yourself because if the society favours evil it will affect the citizens who don't do anything about it. This is what is eventually going to happen; if we don't stop people from doing wrong, this is eventually where we will end up. The only way to escape from this is to change the environment; put in your effort. *Shaytaan* puts in our mind, "Oh I'm just a teenager, how can I change the people? There are so many girls in my class who do this wrong thing. How can I just go and change everybody around myself?"

Slide 65:

Let me quote a *hadith* to you, "If any of you observes a vice," ('vice' is anything bad happening around you) "it is his duty to change it by force" number one, "if he is not able to do so he should protest against it verbally," (go and tell that person hey what you are doing is wrong) number three, there is a *hadith* in Muslim

"Whoever from amongst you sees an evil should change it by his hand, if he is unable to do so then he should change it by his tongue (by speaking against it), and if he is unable to do so then he should reject it in his heart and this is the weakest of Iman."

Slide 66:

If you are travelling and you go to a restaurant where people are drinking you obviously can't go and by force stop them from having alcohol. So the least that you can do is not sit on that table, at least feel bad about it in your heart and pray for them; may Allah (swt) give them *hidayah*, that's something you can do. At least be repulsed by it, that's the least you can do. When you see a friend of yours going to a place where she shouldn't be going or dressed up the way she shouldn't be dressed, speak to her in a kind and polite manner and if she does not listen to you or

if she retaliates or says something rude, show patience and *sabr* because that is the fourth quality that you and I need to have; the quality of being patient. Remember, the last thing was to at least be repulsed by what she is doing. The thoughts in our mind shouldn't be, "Oh wow! Look at her, how lucky she is, how pretty she's looking!" That should not be in our minds.

Slides 67 - 68:

If your ways are different from society's and there are times you feel that people around you are not doing what they are supposed to, know that there are only two scenarios that can happen; number one either you lose the battle by adapting to your environment, that's one thing a lot of people do; that "Oh I can't change them, so I'll join them." The other thing is to have faith by putting up a tough resistance, and this is what a Muslim does. He doesn't change or adapt to the environment. He stands his ground and makes sure that everybody around knows that what he is doing is the right thing and he keeps telling other people, guys what you are doing is wrong.

Slide 69:

There are people who will tell you, when in Rome do as the Romans do; you are on vacation, you are in Europe, Australia, or America so it's fine if we act like them or dress like them. On the other hand however, what is Allah (swt) saying? Allah (swt) says that even in Rome, do as Muslims do. That is the difference, so are you strong enough? Look at everything from Allah's (swt) point of view; Allah (swt) says this is compulsory, it's not an option given to you and me, to wear a *hijab* or to cover your head is not optional. If you are not doing it because you want your vacations to be pleasant, look at it from Allah's (swt) point of view. Do you think Allah (swt) will say, "Oh fine you are going on a vacation, you can wear your swim suit, or uncover your head." Do you think Allah (swt) will be lenient with you because you are on a vacation? Not so at all. If it's so difficult, don't go there, go somewhere else. Go to a Muslim country, where you are comfortable obeying Allah (swt).

Slides 70 - 73:

So basically when you look at these four things they are all inter-related. When you have faith, it will automatically show in your deeds and when you do something yourself, you will automatically try and save your loved ones from falling into that disaster and when you tell people that what they are doing is wrong and that they need to change their lifestyles they will react and you will have to show patience and this patience will automatically strengthen your *imaan*. This is the minimum condition for salvation, this is not *Jannatul Firdaus*. This is barely making it to *Jannah*. So it is not an A grade or a B grade, we are talking about a mere passing grade. *Innal insaana lafee khusr*, if you want to save yourself from the hell-fire you have to do all these four things in order to qualify for *Jannah*. Every single one of these things is very important and anything less will be a failure.

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

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

Reference for teacher:

- Ma'arif Al Qura'n by Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Idaratul ma-Arif, Karachi
- Tafseer Ibn-e-Kathir
- Tafseerul Quran, Urdu Audio by HumaNajmul Hassan, www.al-ilm.com