

MODULE 3

Class title: Levels of Salah (part 14 of Salah series)

Aim of lesson: To try to improve the quality of our Salah

Category: Worship

Class Format: Power Point Presentation

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

(*Ta'awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

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

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

Remember what we did last time? Any idea what we did?

Student: Positions of *salah*.

Teacher: Positions of *salah*. Did anybody try them? If you hadn't been doing them before? You did? Good. May Allah (swt) reward you for it *InshaAllah*.

Now, you know the best way to remember something is to try to practice it immediately, as soon as you learn it. Be it your studies, here or anything. The moment you learn something, immediately start practicing it. Sometimes teachers tell you to go home and do it again, and you're like, yeah sure I'd do it again. But that's actually the best time, you know, your mind is going to absorb it the most at that time. The same thing is true for this. Let's say we learnt it two weeks ago and after that you had done your '*Asr* then *Maghrib* then '*Isha*, you know, immediately you started to implement it. If you're concentrating on your foot, then you'll take care of your back later on, maybe. One by one you should at least try to practice. And if you haven't started by now, please do. Because see, there is no excuse, you can't say in front of Allah (swt) that I didn't know, because now you all know *Alhamdulillah*. One, I'm sure your parents have told you. Second, we've discussed it here, and third, there is so much information in books and on 'the net' and everywhere that you can't say that I didn't know. You can't say that for anything. That I didn't know... because *Alhamdulillah*, we know everything! And what we don't know, we can find out.

Slide 1-2:

Today *InshaAllah*, we're going to see the different levels of *salah*. Different levels of *salah*. Are you familiar with this? This is something that we see in our studies. You get an A, A*, A+, whatever. Then B, C, D, E, U.

Slide 3:

Okay, so these are the normal levels, normal grades that we are used to. Whatever you try to do in life, whether it is some sport, or your studies, or some game that you're playing or whatever! What are you trying to do? You try to win it, you try to improve wherever you are, you always

try to get one notch higher, one level higher, and you always try to aim for the highest point. Right?

Now you see everything is very relative. If you are a position holder, and you've been coming first all your life, let's say you've been blessed. Does that mean that's the end of the competition? You will try to be better than yourself, or position is not everything. Let's say, in a class of 40, you've been coming 8th. Last year I came 8th so this year if I come 6th, is that good or bad?

Students: Good.

Teacher: I'm still not first, second, third, but what have I done? I've become better than myself. So you set standards for yourself and you try to improve yourself from where you were before. And you do that in everything that you do. Whether it is your studies, or it is your '*ibaadah*', whether it's a game, whether it's a sport, whether it's a relationship with your parents, with your friends or anybody. You should try to improve it and bring it to the next level. Right?

Slide 4-6:

Now, do you play games on the computer? Or 'Wii' or whatever? Generally you play a game and score certain points then you go to the next level. And you don't say that I will not try to go to the next level. That's not human nature. It's human nature to try and improve, and it's also human nature to try to beat the other person. If two people are playing, you will try to beat the other person, right? Even in sports if you come first, you're beating the other people, or in class if you're into studies. And you like it, it is human nature that you try to improve and you try to go to the next level. It's human nature to try to be at the top. And there is nothing wrong with it, if you're not doing some hanky panky. It's fine. There's nothing wrong with it, *Alhamdulillah*.

So what we do is that we set standards for ourselves and we try to achieve those goals, those levels. Like I said before also, if you want to get a 90, you have to set your goal, maybe at 95 or something. And then you will be close to 90. Generally you don't actually reach your goal but you try. Set realistic goals but try to work hard to achieve them. We try to find new opportunities and we try to go higher. Similarly, just like you try to improve your studies, your games, your sports, your relationships, you should try to improve your relationship with Allah (swt). And the first step is to improve your *salah*. That is our relationship with our Creator. Right?

Slide 7-8:

Now, scholars or the learned people, who have learned about the *deen*, they have divided the *salah* into five different levels. *Ibn e Qayyim Al Jawzzi*, he has divided it into five different levels. And we're going to see what they are.

Now this is between you and your Creator. You decide which level you are at. And you decide whether you want to go to the next level or not. I don't have to ask you, you will know yourself which level you are standing at and where do you want to go from there. Okay?

The first level:

The level of the one who is negligent and wrongs his soul. Now, if I'm praying, who is getting the benefit? Are you getting the benefit?

Student: No, you are.

Teacher: Yeah, I'm getting the benefit. Right? And if I'm not praying, who is losing?

Students: You.

Teacher: I am losing. Right? So if I pray, I get the benefit and if I don't pray, I'm the loser.

Teacher: Why do I get punished if I don't pray?

Teacher: Because it's an obligatory thing, because I'm completing a *fardh*. Right? But besides that, if I do it well then I'm going to get more reward as well, so that is the benefit.

For example, if your teacher is really making an effort with you, and you get an 'A' grade, she's happy? Right? But who's the gainer? And if you fail, then she is unhappy but at the end of the day, she's not the one who lost. You are the one who lost. Similarly, Allah (swt) and our Prophet *Rasool Allah* (pbuh) tried to give everything to us. Allah (swt) is happy when we do something, but at the end of the day we are the ones who gain or lose. Allah (swt) does not lose anything when we don't pray! We are ones who lose. Right? So that is why there is this level of the person who 'wrong his soul'. I damage myself when I do not do my *salah* properly.

He is the one who falls short in performing *wudu* properly. Performing the prayer upon its time and within its specified limits and fulfilling its essential pillars, he falls short in this. He is unable to do all this, within proper *wudu*, following the time limit. *Alhamdulillah* we've seen the positions, we know what we have to read, we know how we have to cover ourselves, we know about *taharah*, everything is included, right? This is the 'banana peel *salah*'. This is the first level. 'Banana peel'. Have you seen anybody throwing things on the road, educated people in proper cars, not the uneducated ignorant ones who don't know that there's something like a garbage can. Do you see such people on the road who just roll down their windows and out comes a McDonald's glass or Juice box or whatever? Whatever they were eating, have you seen it? What do you think; maybe we've also done that. Okay? And these are all educated people. Do you think that they would do the same thing if they go abroad? They won't. And they come back and say, "Things are so good and clean abroad. Here it is so dirty. So many problems." We are all a part of this. Right? Now, what is this approach? What do you think that they should do, instead of rolling down their windows and throwing the garbage, what do you think that they should do with that garbage? If you're on the road on a long drive, what do you think we should do?

Students: Collect it, just keep it.

Slide 9-11:

Teacher: Just keep it, that's an effort. So what do you do? I don't want to be bothered; I just roll down my window and throw it out. And it can hit somebody or someone slips on it, if it's like a banana peel but I don't care! You know that's a careless attitude. That is a totally careless attitude that you are just not bothered. You want to get rid of it so you don't care what happens after that, that's the approach. And that is sometimes our approach at *salah*. Your mother is telling you to say your prayers again and again. You're just like, "Okay, I just have to get over with this." Just get over with this. That's the banana peel approach, you know. You don't do *wudu* properly; you're not even covered properly. Let's say time is running out for the *Fajr* prayer and the alarm is ringing but you just don't want to get out of the bed, this is the careless attitude. Negligence. You just don't care. And then you're not doing *wudu* properly, if you're not wet properly, then your *wudu* is not complete. If your *wudu* is not complete, your *salah* is invalid. Right? Then if you're not covered properly then you're not taking care of the basic things. Or you know... if you are standing very casually, one leg here one hanging over there! We even tell our kids that don't stand like this in front of your elders because this shows lack of respect. You won't stand like this in front of your principal or somebody high up? So just imagine when you're standing in front of Allah (swt) looking here and there or you're smiling. Obviously if you're smiling, your mind is somewhere else, that's a fact. Okay? Or if you're not even doing *rukuh* properly... Remember, in the class regarding the physical movements? We said that one who does not do his *rukuh* and *sajdah* properly is a thief.

Student: What if they have a problem?

Teacher: Oh, that is an exceptional case and definitely, definitely there are no punishments for exceptions. If you have a back problem, that's a different thing altogether. We're talking about normal, regular movements for regular people, right?

Okay, again, if you're trying, that's a different thing. But if you're not bothered, that's a different thing altogether. That's the 'banana peel' approach.

This is a verse in the *Qur'an* in (Surah Al-Ma'un 107: Verse no. 4 and 5)

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"..So woe to those who offer *salah* but are neglectful of their *salah*."

Woe to those. What is woe? What does it mean?

Student: Punishment?

Teacher: It's actually misery, wretchedness, meaning nothing good is going to come. And Allah (swt) is saying that. Not you and me. Now we move on to the next level of *Salah*, the second level.

Slide 12-13:

The Second Level:

The one who guards his prayer upon the proper time and within the specified limits, fulfils their essential pillars and performs his *wudu* with care. *Alhamdulillah*. Everything is fine. What can be wrong now? I would say, you know, okay, this is fine. I'm doing it in the specified time, I'm taking care of everything, and I'm taking care of the *wudu*. What else is there?

However, his striving in achieving the above is wasted, due to whisperings in his prayer. Who whispers in your prayer? I know that when I'm praying, my friend is not going to come and whisper in my ear, *Alhamdulillah*, we take care of such things, right? We're not going to start doing that but what is happening? The *shaitan* is whispering basically in your heart. So this person gets taken away by his thoughts and ideas. This is the 'scatter-brain *salah*'. You know, your mind is everywhere. You're trying to do multi-tasking. What is multi-tasking?

Teacher: Doing several things – more than one thing at a time. Can you give me an example, when you are praying, what comes in your mind?

Student: What we have to do next.

Teacher: What do you have to do next, for example?

Student: If you're going somewhere, what you want to wear...

Teacher: Okay. Right. You start thinking what am I going to wear, how am I going to go? If you haven't taken permission then okay that is also a step left.

Student: If you forget, you remember all the things.

Teacher: Yes. Okay. You've been thinking about something, trying to recall and it comes right in *Surah Al Fatiha*, and you're like, okay, I'm going to do that right after I do my *salah*, so prayed hurriedly and you get on with whatever you had to do.

Teacher: You start following the conversation which is going on around you. Now this is something, *InshaAllah* after this, we'll discuss how we can take care of these things. Anything else?

You all pray without any whisperings? *Alhamdulillah*, that's great. But does anything come to your mind when you're praying?

Student: Random stuff.

Teacher: Yeah. Random stuff, which is like, not important but since your mind is wandering, that also comes into your thoughts.

Student: Whatever happened in the day...

Teacher: Yeah whatever. If you had a fight with a friend, the whole conversation is going on and it's like I shouldn't have said that, she shouldn't have said that, whatever, you know.

Teacher: Okay, because you're running short of time, so you're trying to finish it quickly and at the same time you're wondering if the next *adhaan* is about to happen. If some important event is about to take place in your life, like there's a wedding or some party or a sports event, your 'Result day' is approaching...by the way when the Result day gets near, who do you feel the closest to? Who do we go to the most? Allah (swt)! At that time you just pray for a good result whether you studied or not. You know, *Alhamdulillah*, we all pray to Allah (swt) because we know that He is the only One who can give it to us. Right?

So getting back to the problem of getting distracted, the problem here is that we are thinking about everything that is going on. You recite '*Alhamdulillah Rabbil Aalameen*', and the thought comes to mind that I have to go and meet a friend. You know, mechanical, parrot like movements are also happening and at the same time.

Slide 14-15:

Now, what happens is that at the end of the day, you're totally out of focus. Your *salah* is totally out of focus, because you're everywhere, you're thinking about everything. And *sath sath*, you're doing *salah*. Right? This is a *hadith*, *Rasool Allah* (pbuh) said,

"Verily a man will leave from his *salah* and only a tenth of his *salah* is written for him." [*Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi*]

Meaning, one-tenth of what you prayed. A ninth, an eighth, a seventh, a sixth, a fifth, a fourth, a third, a half – that means, the more your mind wanders, the less portion you get. That means the less reward you get. So what happened? You put in the effort, you said you prayed, but you were like everywhere, so you didn't even get anything out of it. Loser. Total loser. Right?

Now, we've discussed a few things – these are the problems. How do you think we can counter them? What do you think we should do? Like one of you said that while praying you start to follow somebody else's conversation. What do you think we can do about that? Yes, sometimes what happens is that you're in a place where you can hear the TV, and you start following the program, start following the dialogues.... You know it happens. What do you think we can do about these things?

Student: Put in ear plugs.

Teacher: Put in ear plugs? Okay, why don't you just close the door? Wouldn't that be simpler? Or use earplugs if you can't close the door. Maybe you're at a place where you can't close the door, or you can request the people to please lower down the volume. Maybe they can do that. Or, or if you can't do that, you go to a place where you can close the door, and if you can't do

that then maybe it's a good idea to put in ear plugs. And what we can also do is that when somebody else is praying, that happens with us you know a few friends are in a room, one is praying and the other two are having a conversation. So make life easy for the one whose praying. At least we can do that; we can make an effort because that person will start following our conversation. She's trying to concentrate so we should try to respect the person who is praying and lower our volume or move away from that person.

Student: What if someone is watching TV or they start talking when you've already started praying, so you can't close the door?

Teacher: Yes, then you really can't. You can't do that. In that situation one thing which might help is if you start reading aloud. You hear yourself on top of that, maybe.... if your voice is louder than what is going on, or it might block it a little.

Student: Sometimes we have this that people don't realize that you're praying ..

Teacher: Yes, sometimes, exactly. Sometimes if you're in a big place, maybe somebody doesn't realize, so you do *Allahu Akbar*, or *Alhamdulillah* or something loudly so they'll know that you're praying, and then generally people lower their volume. We all do have this respect *Alhamdulillah*.

What you can do is that if your mind is wandering, it might help you that you start reading aloud, but not at a constant volume, if something becomes constant then again, our mind starts wandering. What you can do is, let's say I'm reading *Surah Al Fatiha*, I might say, '*Alhamdulillah e Rabbil Alameen*' silently, '*Ar Rahman ir Raheem*' silently, '*Maaliki Yaum iddeen, Iyyaka Na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'een*' a little loudly. That might bring me back, that might help to bring you back into focus. Alright?

Student: When I was smaller, I would imagine seeing the word 'Allah' written and then just concentrate on that.

Teacher: Yes. You can, some people do that, like she's saying that when she was a kid, she used to imagine the name 'Allah' written, then concentrating on that. If some of you have done *Umrah*, or *Hajj*, then you can recall the *Ka'aba*. Because you've actually seen it, you actually feel the presence over there; your focus is on that then. People have different ways of focusing, but the whole point is that you need to focus.

Slide 16:

The Third Level:

Now, the third level is when one guards his prayers within the specified limits, fulfils their essential pillars and strives with himself to repel the whisperings, thoughts and ideas. So he's actually in that battle. Like, he's trying to overcome those *waswasay*, those thoughts, those whisperings; he's busy struggling against his enemy *shaitan* so that he does not steal from the prayer. That means the *shaitan* does not take away the reward from the *salah*. On account of this,

he's engaged in both prayer and *jihad*. Do you think you are going to go with a gun in the battlefield in your life? Do you think, realistically speaking? I don't think I'm going to end up in some sort of *jihad* like that. Right? So do you think you have any *jihad* in your life? Do you have any opportunity of *jihad* in your life? What is that?

Student: Like, for *hijab*.

Teacher: Yes, those who wear *hijab*.

Student: And those who don't wear *hijab*, sometimes they make fun of you.

Teacher: Yes. Definitely, she's saying that if you do *hijab*, and your friends or people around you do not, then they might be making fun of you. But that doesn't make you take off your *hijab*, if you take it off then you've lost the battle! There's no *jihad* there. But if you are standing firm against all the criticism and pressure, then what is that? That is *jihad*. Forget anybody else, I like to leave my hair open but I don't do it, why? Because I know that Allah (swt) has asked me to cover my hair in public. So what am I doing? I am doing *jihad* against my desires. Let's say I don't like getting up for *fajr*, I don't like getting up in the morning so I say that Allah (swt) why can't *fajr* be at 9 O'clock? But it doesn't happen; my desires or my wishes are not going to set the rule. So what am I going to do? I can't pray at 9 O'clock so I'm going to get up for *fajr* against my desires. That is *jihad*. Right?

Slide 17-19:

Okay, now this is the 'Caterpillar salah'. Why? Because you are trying to come out of the cocoon. You're just trying to fight it out, trying to concentrate, trying to focus your best. You are putting in your best effort; you're trying to do your best to get out of these things so the *salah* becomes focused. Right? And you fight your enemy, you fight your way out, your enemy's *shaitan* and you try to reach the end level. Or what you do is you try to fight your desires so that your concentration in *salah* improves.

(Surah Al Mominoon 23: Verse number 1-2)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

“Successful are the believers those that offer their *salah* with all earnestness and full obedience.”

Successful are those... Successful means *falah* in Arabic. *Falah*. But what do we mean by 'Successful'? You are going to come first in the next grade, or you're going to be a very rich person, what is success?

Student: Those who achieve *jannah*.

Teacher: Those who achieve *jannah*. So those who are successful are the believers who do this. They concentrate with all earnestness and with full obedience! They make all the effort to do their *salah* properly. They, Allah (swt) is saying, they are successful. Our criterion for success is totally different. But Allah (swt) is saying that they are successful.

What can be beyond that? Right? But.... there's a fourth level.

Slide 20:

The Fourth Level:

The one who stands for the prayer, completes and perfects its due rights, it's essential pillars, performs within its specified limits and his heart becomes engrossed in safeguarding its rights in specified limits. Heart becomes engrossed. There, you were trying to work with your mind, right? You were concentrating, you were making effort to focus your mind and you were concentrating with your mind. Here, you are focusing with your heart. Your connection with Allah (swt) is through your heart! His heart becomes engrossed in safeguarding its rights in specified limits, so that nothing is wasted from it. Nothing is wasted means that nothing goes to the *shaitan*. His whole concern is directed towards its establishment, its completion and its perfection. The word perfect comes twice here. Completes and perfects its due rights, and then his concentration is on its perfection, as it should be. His heart is immersed in the prayer and in enslavement to his Lord, the Exalted.

Slide 21-22:

This is the 'Chill *salah*'. We chill out with our friends. This person is chilling out with Allah (swt). He's chilling, he's totally, totally relaxed. Because his heart is connected with Allah (swt). Right?

Now, sometimes don't we say that there was so much tension, you know, you could feel it? You could actually physically feel it. Actually I won't say that it is tension, but more of concentration. It's an abstract noun, right? But sometimes, when you concentrate very hard on something (you see, concentration is tangible), you can actually feel it. This person is so engrossed in his *salah*, that his concentration is actually... you can actually physically feel it. So tangible! His mind is not anywhere else, except on what he's doing.

Slide 23-24:

This is a *hadith* in *Bukhari*, narrated by *Anas bin Maalik* (ra),
The Prophet (pbuh) said,

“A faithful believer while in prayer is speaking in private to his Lord.” [Bukhari]

So if we chill out with our friends by having a chat, right? On the phone, or through SMS or on the net, or whatever, this person is chilling out with Allah (swt) by having a conversation with Him. How do you think we have a conversation with Allah (swt) in *salah*? Anybody?

Student: We praise Him, we ask Him for help and...

Teacher: Where, where do you do that in *salah*? She's saying that we praise Him and we ask for help, where do we do that in *salah*?

Students: Surah *Fatiha*.

Teacher: Surat ul Fatiha. Right. *Alhamdulillah*. This is a hadith in Muslim, narrated by Abu Hurayrah that *Rasool Allah* (pbuh) said:

“Allah (swt) has said: I have divided the prayer into two halves between Me and My servant. And My servant will receive what he asks for.” [Muslim]

Now does this mean that all my *du'as* are going to be accepted? If I ask for an ‘iPhone’ and I don't get it, does that mean that my *du'a* was not accepted? No. We discussed that before, right? What happens to our *du'as* if they are not accepted? One possibility that they are accepted, great. What if they're not accepted? What happens?

Student: We get reward.

Teacher: Get reward, where?

Students: In the Hereafter.

Teacher: In the Hereafter, or?

Student: Or if something bad was supposed to happen, then it won't happen...

Teacher: Yes, something bad that was supposed to happen...

Student: Or something even better can happen...

Teacher: Yes you could get something even better, right? ¹So you can get what you asked for, you can get something better in this world, or you will get something in the Hereafter, and there, people will say that I wish that none of my prayers were answered... because that way, you're getting something where you need it the most. Whatever you get here you leave it behind. But if you get it where you need it the most, you're going to say that I wish nothing was accepted here so I could have gotten everything over there. So this is what Allah (swt) is saying, He's saying here that My servant will receive what he asks for. When the servant says *Alhamdulillah* *rabbi*.

¹ For the people that sometimes see that their Duas are not being accepted, there is either the option that the Dua will be accepted later on in this life or in the Hereafter or the option that the Dua will be accepted by other means as one Hadith said, Jabir narrates from the Prophet, “Whoever does duaa to Allah, Allah fulfills his seeking *or in exchange averts misfortune until the duaa is not related to sin* or breaking some relation.” (Tirmidhi)

Student: How do you know? When the *du'a* that you made... you don't think it's gonna get accepted, or you know that you're going to get it in the Hereafter, or you'll be compensated here in this world?

Teacher: Sometimes you don't find out. Sometimes you don't find out that the *du'a* that you asked for one night, that is the reason something good happened to you, or you're going to get it over there, you know everything will not become that clear over here. Right? Sometimes when you ask for something and you get it and you say, "Thank you Allah Ta'ala for listening to my *du'a*." You know immediately, but sometimes you can't relate it, you don't know on which *du'a*'s basis this happened, you really don't know. Right?

"...When My servant says 'Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe – *Alhamdulillah Rabbil Aalameen*', Allah the Most High says, 'My servant has praised me.' And when the servant says, '*Ar Rahman ir Raheem* – the most Compassionate, the Merciful', Allah the Most High says, 'My servant has lauded me (he has praised me)' then when the servant says, '*Maaliki Yaum id deen* – Master of the Day of Judgment', then Allah (swt) says, 'My servant has glorified me' and sometimes He will say, 'My servant has entrusted his affairs to me.'

If I'm saying that Allah (swt) is the Lord of the Worlds, He's the Master of the Day of Judgment then I'm putting everything in front of Him. So that is why Allah (swt) is saying that I'm entrusting my affairs with Him.

Then the worshipper says, '*Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'een* – You do we worship and of You do we ask for help.'

I'm saying that I'm not going to ask help from anybody except You. You think Allah (swt) is not going to help me if I say that with earnestness and with all my heart? Then Allah Ta'ala says, '...This is between Me and My servant and My servant will receive what he asks for.' Why, because he is saying that he will not ask anyone else.

And then you say, '*Siraat alazeena ana'mta 'alaihim, Ghairil maghdhoobi 'alaihim, wala adhaalleen* – Guide us to the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou has been Gracious, and not of those who have incurred Thy Displeasure nor of those who have gone astray' then Allah Ta'ala says, 'This is for My servant and My servant will receive what he asks for.'

So *Surat ul Fatiha* is basically a conversation between the Lord and the one who's praying, right? Now, this is the ultimate. His heart is involved; his heart is not wandering anywhere, and what are you doing? You're having a conversation with your friend; this person is having a conversation with Allah (swt). He's chilling out with Allah (swt). What can be higher than this? Can anything be higher than this? Not for someone like us? And yet, there is. There is the fifth level.

Slide 25-27:

The Fifth Level:

The one who stands for the prayer like the one mentioned in the fourth level. He's achieved that, his heart is involved; he's having a conversation with Allah (swt), however, on top of this he has taken his heart and placed it in front of his Lord. His heart is not just connected, he has placed his heart in front of the Lord! Looking towards Him with his heart, with anticipation. His heart filled with love and His Might as if he sees and witnesses Allah (swt). We all know that Allah (swt) is looking at you. When we are praying, we know that He is looking at us. But this person can actually feel Allah (swt)'s presence. He also feels that Allah (swt) is there. That is the ultimate, the fifth level! The whisperings, thoughts and ideas have vanished. And the coverings which were between him and his Lord are razed. It doesn't mean that we can actually, physically, see a person in the form of Allah (swt) *na'oodhoobillah*. We're not saying that. He actually feels, sometimes don't you feel it, let's say when you're praying and somebody enters the room? You feel the presence, you can tell. *Awaaz nahi arahi* {you don't hear anything} but you can feel that somebody is there. Does it happen with you? And if you are in the middle of your *salah*, you keep wondering as to who came in. Right? That's the 'scatter brain' approach in which you try to guess whose footsteps do they sound like? But this person actually feels the presence of Allah (swt)! Because he has placed his heart in front of Allah (swt).

And that is why they think the coverings are razed. He actually feels Allah (swt) there. The difference between this person and another with respect to the prayer is superior and greater than what is between the heavens and the earth. This person is busy with his Lord, delighted with Him. Not just relaxing. He's actually happy. This is not just a 'chill *salah*'. This is a 'chilled and thrilled *salah*'. He's actually enjoying it. He's actually delighted. He can actually feel Allah (swt)'s presence! He has placed his heart in front of Allah (swt). This is the ultimate. This is like climbing Mount Everest, right at the top! Cool. Chill and thrill. Right?

Slide 28:

In a *hadith* in *Muslim*, narrated by *Abu Hurayrah*, *Rasool Allah* (pbuh) said,

“Allah (swt) says, ‘My Servant becomes closer to Me by performing those deeds which are obligatory on him, like *salah*, fast, *hajj*, *zakat*’ we all know that *Alhamdulillah*, right? ‘And he gets close to Me through constant observance of optional prayer.’ Constant observance... What happens with us? Sometimes you know, like exams are near and we're like really high. Prayer after prayer, which is good, not saying that you should not do so. But then what happens? Result arrives! Forget Allah (swt). Even if you pray little, we're talking about optional prayers here, even if you pray little, it should be constant. Even if you're praying two extra, *Alhamdulillah*, instead of doing six in one day and then zero for the next five months, instead of that, two everyday would be better. So how do you become close to Allah (swt)? By praying extra, by doing something besides the *fardh*, besides the obligatory. That can be extra *salah*, extra fasting, extra *sadaqah*, *zakat* is *fardh*. *Sadaqah* is extra. *Nafil*, the word *nafil* means extra.

So when we do *nafil salah*, that's extra. That's optional; you're trying to please Allah (swt). He hasn't asked you to do that, but you're trying, it's not *fardh* on you. What are you trying to do? You're trying to please Allah (swt) because you want to go a higher level. So.....

“...My servant becomes closer to me by performing those deeds which are obligatory on him and he gets close to me through constant observance of optional prayer, until he becomes my beloved. When he becomes my beloved, I become his ears, through which he hears, his eyes through which he sees, and his hands with which he holds, and his feet with which he walks.”
[*Muslim*].

Do you think such a person would do anything wrong? If Allah (swt) is his ears, his eyes, hands, and feet, would he listen to something wrong? Would he say something wrong? Would he pick something wrong? No.

Slide 29:

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (RA) used to stand so motionless while praying that he was compared to a piece of garment thrown on the floor. (Imam Ahmad)

Slide 30:

Now these are all achievable targets, you know. What we have to do is that we have to try and go a level up, every time. Wherever you are, whichever position you are at, you have to try and achieve the next level. And you know what the best part is? Allah (swt) is so Merciful, that even if once in your lifetime you've achieved level 5 of your *salah* or a level higher than where you're standing, and at other times, you're trying to make an effort, you're not at the 'banana peel' or careless level... you're like making an effort to improve your *salah*, but once in a lifetime you achieve the best *salah*, Allah (swt) with His infinite mercy, He's going to increase the levels of your *salah* to your best *salah*. So at least make an effort. At least once in your lifetime, try to achieve something really, really well. You know, at times when exams are near or during *Ramadan* or your *Umrah* or *Hajj*, you feel really really connected to Allah (swt), so try to achieve that and *InshaAllah* with His mercy we can hope that all our other *salahs* which we are trying to improve, but are unable to for some reason...He will *InshaAllah* increase them and take them to the next level as well.

Slide 31-32:

You know when 'Empire State Building' was the tallest building; nobody could imagine that anything could be taller than that. But now it's like, sky's the limit. That's not a big deal anymore. So you have to make conscious effort to achieve the next level. May Allah (swt) help all of us *InshaAllah* to reach that level, the next level and level 5 *InshaAllah*.

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*
(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*