



KEYS TO PARADISE

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UNDERSTANDING TAWHEED

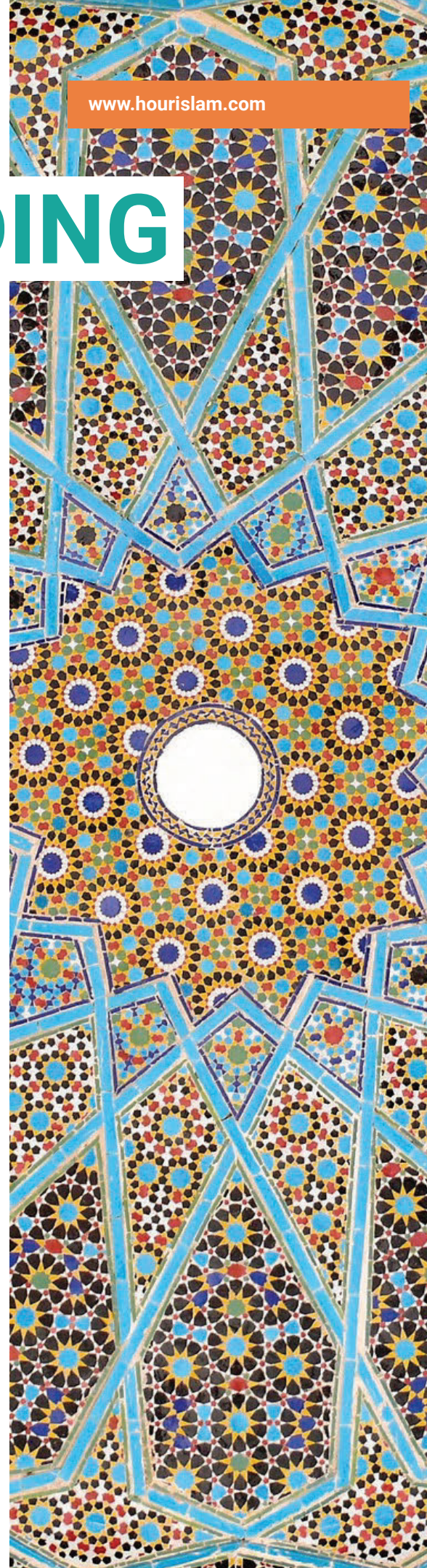
Throughout our lives, we learn many different things, different sciences, different disciplines, different fields of knowledge; all so that we can advance and benefit with these different kinds of knowledge in our lives and for those around us.

The same can be said with what we learn concerning our religion; we learn different aspects of Islam, different disciplines, different fields of knowledge. The purpose of this is to benefit ourselves in this life and more importantly in the hereafter.

But there's one field of knowledge that many of us have unfortunately neglected and not given much emphasis to; and that is the knowledge of Allah, our Lord and Creator, about who He is and what He expects from us.

The well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim, says:

“There is no doubt that the most noble and greatest thing to know is Allah, whom there is no god but He, Lord of the worlds...”



He also says:

“Based on one’s knowledge of Allah is his veneration for Him in his heart, and those most knowledgeable of Him are those most revering and venerating of Him.”

So the relationship and connection you have with Allah is proportionate to your level of knowledge of Him, and those most knowledgeable of Him are those most worshipping of Him. Based on this, it is of utmost importance for every Muslim to learn the basics of this field of Islamic knowledge, such basics that no Muslim can be excused for being ignorant of.

It is quite sad that many Muslims today are ignorant of who Allah really is and the basic foundation upon which Islam is built, which is the Tawheed of Allah, or His oneness and His sole right to be worshiped alone without any partners. If they truly knew Allah, they would never venerate others or direct their worship to them.

Allah says in the Qur’an:

عَنْ تَلْهِيبِ الْيُحْيَىٰ بِعَبْنِ آخْتَهُ يُعْرِضُ لَهَا بِحَبْلِ الْيُحْيَىٰ

“And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others with Him [in worship].” [Yusuf 12:106]

This is the sad state of most of mankind, and it has been the case since ancient times. It is for this reason that Allah sent prophets and messengers throughout history for the sole purpose of guiding mankind out of the darkness of Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating partners with Allah) into the light of Iman (belief) and Tawheed (attributing Oneness to Allah). It is only through learning Tawheed and then uniting upon it that our state as individuals and as an Ummah will improve.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

تُعَيِّبُ لِبَنَائِهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ۗ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْإِيمَانِ ۚ إِنَّ الْإِيمَانَ بِرَبِّهِمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ۗ

"It is only those who believe and do not tarnish their Iman with injustice (Shirk) who are guaranteed security and are rightly guided." [Al-An'am 6:82]

So here Allah makes the condition for prosperity and security in this life and the next to be based on not mixing our Iman with Shirk which nullifies Tawheed.

Based on all of this, learning Tawheed is something that every Muslim is responsible for, and no one is excused. So get comfortable and get ready to learn about the most essential aspect of your religion, the very foundation that the acceptance or rejection of all of your deeds will be based on – the Tawheed of Allah.



What Is The Purpose of Life?

Think about it: is our purpose in this world simply to eat, sleep, work, acquire some material things and enjoy ourselves?

Is this our purpose?

Why were we born?

What is the object of our existence?

What is the wisdom behind the creation of man and this universe?

To answer the last question, let's think about the following: Look around you. Unless you live in a cave, you are surrounded by things we humans have made with our own hands. Ask yourself, why did we make those things? The answer, of course, is that we make things to perform some specific function for us. In short, we make things to serve us. So by extension, why did our Creator make us, if not to serve Him?



Thus, Allah created us in order for us to serve Him and worship Him.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

سَنَاقَةَ أَجْرِي خَلِقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالنَّاسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِي

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." [al-Dhariyat 51:56]

That in a nutshell is the purpose of this life. The purpose behind our creation is to recognize the Creator, to worship Him, to surrender ourselves to Him, and to obey the laws that He has determined for us. This is our purpose in this life.

What Does It Mean to Worship Allah?

The well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, gives us the answer:

“Worship is a comprehensive term encompassing everything that Allah loves and is pleased with – whether sayings or actions, both outward and inward.”

What is important to remember concerning worship is that it is Allah’s sole right and must only be directed to Him alone. If anything is associated with Allah in any act of worship, that action becomes invalid and unacceptable.

Allah has given us some examples of these acts of worship and highlighted the importance of making sure we direct them to Him alone:

1 Du’a (Supplication):

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِي بِمَا خَلَقْتَنِي أَنْ أَسْجُدَ لِلشَّمْسِ وَالْقَمَرِ ۚ بَلْ لِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ بَلْ لِي بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّي عِزٌّ ۚ أَكْفَىٰ عُقُوبًا مَّنْ جَاءَ بِذُنُوبِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَجَابَ لَهُ دُعَاؤُهَا خَبَعًا

“And your Lord says, ‘Supplicate to Me; I will respond to you.’ Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humbled.” [Ghafir 40:60]

2 Salah (Prayer):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَالْقَمَرِ ۚ إِنَّمَا تَسْجُدُونَ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to Allah, Who created them, if you truly worship Him alone.” [Fussilat 41:37]

3 Sacrificial Slaughter:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَأَنِبَأْتُكُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسَلِّمِينَ ۗ

“Say: Surely my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my life, and my death are all for Allah—Lord of all worlds. He has no partner.” [Al-An’am 6:162-163]

These are some examples of outward bodily acts of worship. Another important form of worship is that which is related to the **heart**, such as;

- Belief
- Sincerity
- God-consciousness
- Love
- Fear
- Hope

These acts of worship related to the heart, are more important than outward bodily acts of worship, because without the actions of the heart there is no benefit in actions of the body.

Isn't the distinguishing feature between the believer and the hypocrite based on what is in the heart of actions? Also, doesn't a person enter Islam first through the action of his heart before any bodily actions?

Highlighting the importance of the heart and its role, the Prophet ﷺ said,

“There is an organ in the body, if healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.”
[Bukhari]

Expounding on this, the well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim, says,

“Actions of the heart represent the spirit of worship and its core; so if the actions of the body parts are missing it, it is like a dead body without a soul.”



Balancing Love, Hope and Fear

You may be asking yourself;

How does the believer worship his Creator?

What should you have in your heart when worshipping Allah?

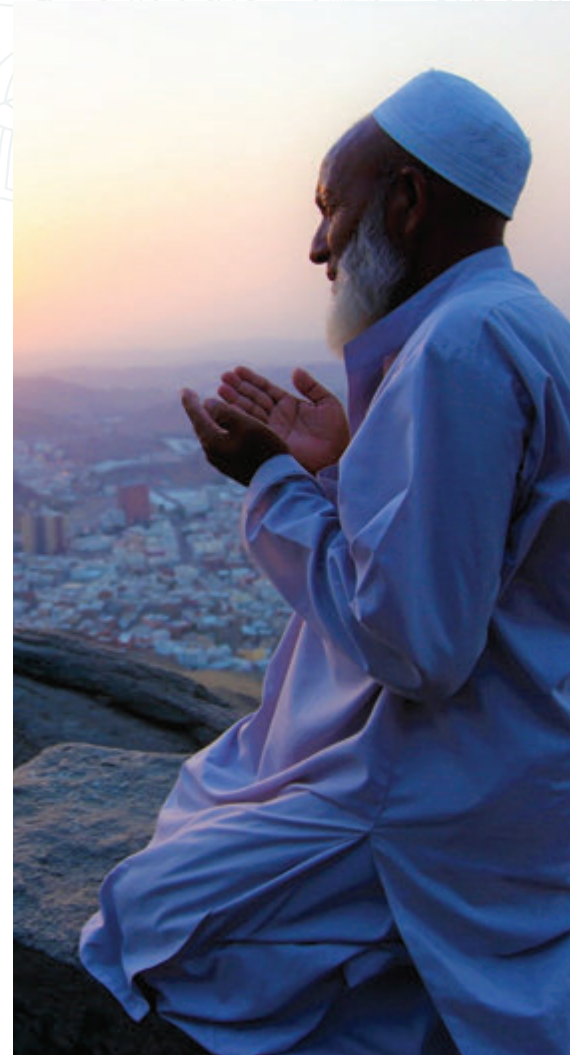
The well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim says,

“The heart on its journey towards Allah is like that of a bird. Love is its head, and fear and hope are its two wings. When the head is healthy, then the two wings will fly well. When the head is cut off, the bird will die. When either of two wings is damaged, the bird becomes vulnerable to every hunter and predator.”

So in order to function well in this life as a believer, and be rewarded with Allah’s Paradise in the next, we need balance between love, fear and hope. Putting too much emphasis on fear of Allah without any reason leads to despair, and putting too much emphasis on hope without any reason leads to negligence.

Thus, love, fear and hope are the three pillars of worship that are only to be directed to Allah alone. When they are directed to other than Allah, it constitutes Shirk.

However, does that mean that you can’t love anyone besides Allah, or fear anyone besides Him? No. The kind of love, fear and hope which is exclusively for Allah is the one that is associated with veneration that leads a person to worship that object of love, fear or hope. As for a natural love or fear for others that does not involve veneration, we are not forbidden from it.



Directing Your Worship Towards Allah

What about asking others for your needs?

It is not considered Shirk to ask others for your needs on the condition that you are not asking out of veneration for them and that they are able to provide you for what you are asking them for. As for asking others for something that only Allah can provide, then this is what constitutes Shirk.

To further elaborate, every human being seeks things that will benefit him and avoids things that will harm him, and no one can provide what will benefit him nor prevent what will harm him other than his Creator. When you realize this, you understand that to seek your needs solely from your Creator is the very essence of worship.

Moreover, if we were to analyze the stories of the prophets and messengers in the Qur'an, we would find something common among all of them: they all called their people to single out Allah in worship. In fact, this was the primary theme that their mission was based upon.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

أَمْ لَمْ نَكُنْ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ نَبِيًّا لِقَوْمِكَ فَذَكَرْ أَتَى بِالنَّبِيِّينَ أَنْ يُبَيِّنَ لِقَوْمِهِمْ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاسْبُحْ عَلَيَّ فِي مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ
 “We never sent a messenger before you except that we revealed to him: There is no god [worthy of worship] except Me, so worship Me [alone].” [Al-Anbiya 21:25]

Prophet Nuh said to his people:

يَا قَوْمِ اسْبُحُوا لِلَّهِ فَكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَابْتَغُوا فِيهِ فَسَلٰةً لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْبُرْجِ
 “O my people! Worship Allah—you have no other god besides Him.” [Al-A'raf 7:59]

Prophet Hud said to his people:

قَدْ أَخَذْتُ آلَ خَيْثَمَةَ عَلَىٰ أَن يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 “O my people! Worship Allah—you have no other god besides Him.”
 [Al-A’raf 7:65]

Prophet Salih said to his people:

قَدْ أَخَذْتُ آلَ خَيْثَمَةَ عَلَىٰ أَن يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 “O my people! Worship Allah—you have no other god besides Him.”
 [Al-A’raf 7:73]

Prophet Ibrahim said to his people:

تَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 “Worship Allah, and fear Him.”
 [Al-Ankabut 29:16]

All of this shows us the importance of making sure that we single out Allah in worship and direct all of our acts of worship to Him alone.



The Significance of The Shahaadah

The foundation of the Islamic faith is belief in the Oneness of God. According to the teachings of Islam, Allah is absolutely One and His Oneness should never be compromised by associating partners with Him - neither in worship nor in belief. Due to this, Muslims are required to maintain a direct relationship with Allah, and therefore all intermediaries are absolutely forbidden.

This is the essence of Islam which is embodied in the first pillar of Islam, the testimony or the Shahadah of 'La ilaha illa Allah' or 'none has the right to be worshipped besides Allah'.

The significance of this testimony is too great to encompass. But some of its virtues are as follows:

1 It is the firmest handhold which will never break:

مَنْ شَهِدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَبِحَدِّ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ رُسُلُ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَقٌّ أَبَدًا بِمَا آخَرَهُ

"So whoever disbelieves in the taghut (anything worshipped besides Allah) and believes in Allah, then he has grasped the firmest handhold which will never break." [Al-Baqarah 2:256]

2 It is the highest level of Iman:

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Iman is seventy or sixty odd branches, the most superior of them is the statement 'La ilaha illa Allah'. The lowest is to remove something harmful from the pathway. And shyness is a branch of Iman." [Bukhari]

3 It is a cause for salvation from eternal Hellfire:

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever testifies that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, Allah will forbid him to the Fire." [Muslim]

4 It is a cause for entering Paradise:

The Prophet ﷺ said: *“Whoever testifies that there is none worthy of worship except Allah alone without any partners, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger, and that Jesus is the slave of Allah and His Messenger, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a spirit from Him, and that Paradise is true and the Fire is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if they were few.” [Bukhari & Muslim]*

These are only a few of the many virtues of this great testimony that brings a person into the fold of Islam. However, it only benefits the one who proclaims it with faith and understanding.

The Meaning of 'La Ilaha Illa Allah'

- **'La ilaha'** is a form of negation, where you are negating the right of any deity or god to be worshipped.
- **'illa Allah'**, is a form of affirmation, where you are now affirming the right of Allah alone to be worshipped. So because of who Allah is (the one and only true God), it is His sole right to be worshipped.

So to sum it up, the testimony **'La ilaha illa Allah'** means:

"There is no true god who deserves to be worshipped besides Allah."



Shirk

Since the concept of Tawheed or the oneness of God is a central and foundational theme in Islam, it naturally follows that any attempt to undermine this concept is considered perilous.

Thus, there is no sin in Islam worse than that of Shirk or ascribing partners to Allah.

The matter of Shirk is so serious simply because of how unjust it is. If Allah is the One who gave you your eyes, your brain, your heart, your breath and everything else, does He not deserve praise and thanks? Now how about directing that praise and thanks to others who had no share in creating you or providing for you?

A man once asked the Prophet ﷺ:

“Which sin is the worst in the sight of Allah?”

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

“That you ascribe to Allah a rival when it was He who created you.”

[Bukhari and Muslim]

What Is Shirk?

Shirk is to ascribe a partner or equal to Allah, whether it be in His Lordship, or in His worship, or in His Names and Attributes.

- 1 Shirk in Lordship:** There are certain characteristics of Lordship that belong solely to Allah, like creating, sustaining, providing, etc. Whoever believes that such characteristics belong to other than Allah or associates a partner to Allah in these characteristics has committed Shirk in Allah’s Lordship.
- 2 Shirk in worship:** The right to be worshipped is a right that belongs solely to Allah. So whoever believes that others deserve any kind of worship or associates partners with Allah when worshipping Him has committed Shirk in Allah’s worship.

- 3 **Shirk in Allah’s Names and Attributes:** There are certain names and attributes of Allah that He has taught us through His revelation. These names and attributes are unique in every way and belong to Allah alone. Whoever attributes any of Allah’s Names or Attributes to others has committed Shirk in Allah’s Names and Attributes.

Committing Shirk in any of these categories is of great danger and comes with severe consequences.

Among these consequences are the following:

- 1 **It is the only sin that Allah does not forgive if one does not repent from it:**

لَا يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ مَا شَرِكُوا بِهِ مِنْ عِبَادَتِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him, but forgives anything else of whoever He wills. And whoever associates others with Allah has indeed committed a grave sin.” [Al-Nisa 4:48]

- 2 **It causes all of one’s good deeds to go to waste:**

وَإِنْ يَشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ

“Had they associated others with Him, their good deeds would have been wasted.” [Al-An’am 6:88]

- 3 **It prevents one from entering Paradise and guarantees him to end up in Hellfire forever:**

وَالَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ وَأَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ يَشْرِكُونَ بِاللَّهِ عِشْرَانًا مِمَّا كَسَبُوا مِنْ سُوءٍ

“Whoever associates others with Allah will surely be forbidden Paradise by Allah. Their home will be the Fire. And the wrongdoers will have no helpers.” [Al-Ma’idah 5:72]

So be careful of Shirk and everything that leads to it, for its consequences are extremely severe.

Which Came First: Tawheed or Shirk?

Some people argue that humans have always been worshipping different gods from the beginning of time, and that it was Tawheed or monotheism that came later. But is that really true? Not quite.

Allah tells us:

عِندَ آخِرَتِهِ أَتَى نِعْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنْتُمْ كَانْتُمْ شَيْئًا وَاحِدًا
عِندَ آخِرَتِهِ أَتَى نِعْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنْتُمْ كَانْتُمْ شَيْئًا وَاحِدًا

“Humanity was once nothing but a single community [of believers], but then they differed.” [Yunus 10:19]

Ibn Abbas (ra) explains:

“Between Nuh and Adam were ten generations; all of them upon the religion of truth. Then they differed, so Allah sent the prophets as bringers of glad tidings and as warners.”

So the prophets and messengers were all sent to their people to bring them back to what humanity was originally upon, and that is Tawheed. As such, calling to Tawheed and warning against Shirk was the one theme that we find common in the mission of all of Allah’s prophets and messengers.

As for the last messenger to be sent, our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, we find that the first thirteen years of his mission as a prophet was focused on calling his people to Tawheed and warning them from Shirk.

As such, the Qur’an is filled with verse upon verse addressing this very topic. But something very interesting, is the many different styles used in the Qur’an to highlight this topic.

Some of these are as follows:

1 Directly commanding us to worship Allah alone and abandon ascribing partner to Him:

عِبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ عِندَهُ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَخَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Worship Allah alone and associate none with Him.” [Al-Nisa 4:36]

2 Linking the reason behind our creation to the worship of Allah:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي ۚ وَمَا كُنْتُ بِمُرْسَلًا ۚ وَإِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ

“I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.” [Al-Dhariyat 51:56]

3 Deducing Allah’s sole right to be worshipped through proving His Lordship, i.e. that if He alone created, then He alone deserves worship:

بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ أَلْفُ سِنِينَ ۖ وَمَا يَشُوعُونَ ۚ وَإِنِ لَمِنَ آيَاتٍ لِّمَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَخَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Among His signs are the day and the night, the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to Allah, Who created them all, if you truly worship Him alone.” [Fussilat 41:37]

4 Proving that Allah alone deserves to be worshipped by demonstrating His perfection compared to false gods who are deprived of that perfection:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ أَنشَأَ لَكَ بَنِينَ: يَا أَبَتِئِمَّا عْبُدُ ۚ إِنِّي نَرَىٰ كُفْرًا بِهِ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مَا لَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ عِندَهُ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَخَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“When [Ibrahim] said to his father: O dear father! Why do you worship what can neither hear nor see, nor benefit you at all?” [Maryam 19:42]

5 Using parables to demonstrate Allah’s sole right to be worshipped and how others don’t deserve that worship:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ۚ بَلْ يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ أَمَا لَهُمْ آيَاتٌ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي لَيْلٍ أَوْ يَوْمٍ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ سَحَابٌ مِّنْ ذُرَّاتٍ فَسَيَّئِرُهُمْ ذُرَّاتٌ مِّنْ نَّجَسٍ عَالِقَةٍ فَيَسْفِهُهُمُ أَوْ يَخْتَصِمِيهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُمْ حَسْبٌ ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“The parable of those who take allies other than Allah is that of a spider who takes a home. And the weakest of all homes is certainly that of a spider, if only they knew.”

[Al-Ankabut 29:41]

These, along with many other styles used in the Qur’an demonstrate the great importance the Qur’an gave to the topic of Tawheed and Shirk.

The Different Categories of Shirk

It was previously mentioned that Shirk is to ascribe a partner or equal to Allah, and that the matter of Shirk is an extremely dangerous one, as there is no sin greater in the sight of Allah than it.

However, it should be understood that Shirk is of two kinds:

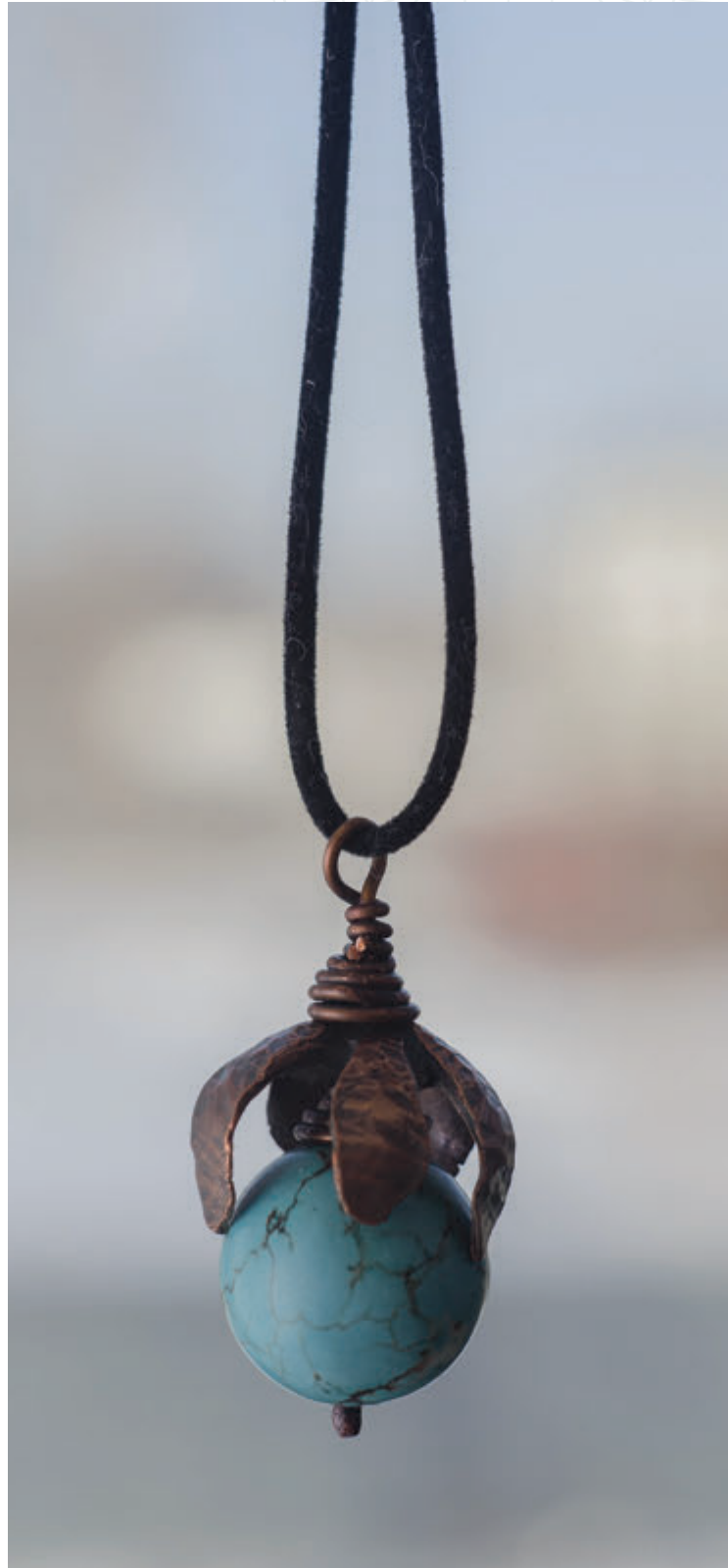
- **Major Shirk**
- **Minor Shirk**

So what is meant by these two kinds of Shirk and what are some examples of each?

Firstly: **Major Shirk**

To ascribe to someone other than Allah something that belongs solely to Allah, which is basically Shirk in Allah's Lordship, worship and Names and Attributes (as previously explained).

This kind of Shirk causes one to leave the fold of Islam and guarantees him eternal punishment in the Hellfire if he does not repent from it before death.



Some examples of Major Shirk:

- 1 **Supplicating to other than Allah, like asking for your needs that only Allah can provide from false gods or the dead, whether they be prophets or saints:**

عِبَادِ اللَّهِ لَا تُدْعُوا إِلَهُاتٍ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ لَا يَنْفَعُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّونَ شَيْئًا ۚ وَإِن يَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ فَيَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ عِبَادَتِهِمْ وَكُفِّرُوا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَا لِلَّهِ بِشَيْءٍ عِندَهُمْ ۚ

"And do not invoke besides Allah what can neither benefit nor harm you – for if you do, then you will certainly be one of the wrongdoers." [Yunus 10:106]

- 2 **Associating others with Allah in love and veneration, by loving a created being as one loves Allah:**

عِبَادِ اللَّهِ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا لِلَّهِ مِثْلَ شَيْءٍ غَيْرِهِ يُحِبُّونَ مَا يَحِبُّ اللَّهُ يُحِبُّونَ مَا يَحِبُّ اللَّهُ يُحِبُّونَ مَا يَحِبُّ اللَّهُ

"And yet there are some who take others as Allah's equal – they love them as they should love Allah." [Al-Baqarah 2:165]

- 3 **Associating others with Allah in fear, like believing that created beings have supernatural powers that can harm us, or believing that the dead can harm the living:**

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ الَّيْسَ يَكْفُرُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذُنُوبِهِ كَبِيرَاتٍ ۚ

"That is only from Shaytan, trying to prompt you to fear his followers. So do not fear them; fear Me if you are true believers." [Aal Imran 3:175]

- 4 **Believing that others besides Allah have knowledge of the unseen or the future, like fortune-tellers and soothsayers:**

قُلْ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ سِوَا مَا تُصَلِّيْنَ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۚ

"Say: None in the heavens and the earth has knowledge of the unseen except Allah." [Al-Naml 27:65]

- 5 **Believing that others besides Allah have the right to legislate that which only Allah can legislate for us, like believing in man-made systems of governance:**

قُلْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخِذْتُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخِذْتُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخِذْتُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ

"Or do they have associate-gods who have ordained for them beliefs which Allah has not authorized?" [Al-Shura 42:21]

Secondly: Minor Shirk

Anything that leads to Major Shirk, or what has been described in the texts as being Shirk but does not reach the extent of Major Shirk.

This kind of Shirk is considered a major sin but does not cause one to leave the fold of Islam.

It does not negate the Tawheed in one's heart but it diminishes it.

Some examples of Minor Shirk:

- 1 **Riya**, which is to perform an act of worship which is supposed to be solely for Allah with the intention of showing it off to others. The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Shall I not inform you of what I fear for you more than the Dajjal? It is the hidden shirk. It is when a man stands up for prayer, then beautifies his prayer for others to see." [Ibn Majah]

- 2 Using **amulets** or good luck charms and hanging them in different places for protection. The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Spells, amulets and love-charms are Shirk." [Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah]

- 3 **Seeking blessings** in things which Allah has not made as a means of blessings, like wiping the graves of saints seeking blessings therefrom or praying in certain places where it is claimed that there is blessings. The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Those before you would take the graves of their prophets as places of worship. So don't take graves as places of worship, for I forbid you from doing so." [Muslim]

The Categories of Tawheed

As we previously learned, Tawheed is the central theme of Islam. As such, it is vital for every Muslim to learn about what Tawheed encompasses. By analysing the various texts that concern Tawheed, we can conclude that Tawheed generally comes under three categories:

- **Tawheed of Lordship**
- **Tawheed of the Names and Attributes**
- **Tawheed of Worship**

So let's take a look at each one of these categories.



Tawheed al-Rububiyyah or Lordship

What this category means is affirming that Allah is One and unique in His actions, such as creation, sustaining, providing, governing, giving life and death, and so on. These are characteristics of Lordship that belong to Allah alone, and one's Tawheed is not complete unless he affirms that.

This category of Tawheed is something that the majority of humanity affirm in essence. In fact, what history shows us is that there were very rare cases of the total denial of a supreme divine being who created this world and sustains it. What this proves is that the natural position of human beings is belief in God and not disbelief in His existence, as atheists would like you to believe. Thus, what was common among all people in the past was their mutual understanding of the existence of a supreme divine being who created everything that exists, including the Mushrikun who used to believe in Allah's existence as the Creator, Provider and Controller of this universe.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

لَقَدْ سَأَلْنَا آلِهَتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ حَمَلَهُنَّ أَفَرَأْتَهُنَّ يُحْمِلُنَّ وِزْرَ رَبِّكَ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ جَاءَ بِسُحُورٍ لَيْلٍ قُرْآنًا فَسَاءَ لَكَ إِلَٰهًا تَدْعُو ۗ فَخَذَّ لِلْحَيَاتِ الْكَاثِرَاتِ وَالْغَالِيَاتِ

"If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon, they will certainly say, 'Allah!' How can they then be deluded?" [Al-Ankabut 29:61]

But although the majority of humanity affirm this category of Tawheed, it is not sufficient to grant them salvation from the Hellfire or admission into Paradise. If that was the case, there would have been no point of contention between the messengers and their people because all of them affirmed this aspect of Tawheed, but rather the contention was over Allah's oneness and exclusivity to be worshiped.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

مَا كُنَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نُجُودًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَاشِفُونَ ۗ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَآتِيكَ بِشَأْنٍ تُرَاوِدُ إِلَيْكِهِ أَفْئِدَةً تَلْجَأُ وَالْقُلُوبُ تَكْفُرُ ۗ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُبَيِّنُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُعْقِلُونَ ۗ وَإِنَّا لَنُرِيَنَّكَ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نُجُودًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَاشِفُونَ ۗ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَآتِيكَ بِشَأْنٍ تُرَاوِدُ إِلَيْكِهِ أَفْئِدَةً تَلْجَأُ وَالْقُلُوبُ تَكْفُرُ ۗ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُبَيِّنُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُعْقِلُونَ ۗ

"We never sent a messenger before you except that We revealed to him that, 'There is no god [worthy of worship] except Me, so worship Me [alone].'" [Al-Anbiya 21:25]

Having said that, there are several Iman-related effects that result from affirmation of Tawheed of Allah's Lordship. Among these are:

1 Having the love of Allah:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُرِيدُ الْإِسْلَامَ فَهُوَ يُعْتَدِلُ ۗ وَإِنَّا لَنُرِيَنَّكَ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نُجُودًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَاشِفُونَ ۗ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَآتِيكَ بِشَأْنٍ تُرَاوِدُ إِلَيْكِهِ أَفْئِدَةً تَلْجَأُ وَالْقُلُوبُ تَكْفُرُ ۗ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُبَيِّنُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُعْقِلُونَ ۗ

"And yet there are some who take others as Allah's equal – they love them as they should love Allah. But the believers love Allah even more." [Al-Baqarah 2:165]

2 Getting to taste the sweetness of Iman:

The Prophet ﷺ said: "He has found the taste of Iman who is content with Allah as his Lord, with Islam as his religion and with Muhammad as his Prophet." [Muslim]

3 Being content with whatever Allah has decreed:

أَمْ يَرْجُونَ أَنْ نُلْقِيَهمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنْ يَسْتَمِعُوا مِنْهُمْ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
 وَأَنْ يَرْجُوا أَنْ نُلْقِيَهمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنْ يَسْتَمِعُوا مِنْهُمْ شَيْئًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“We will certainly test you with a touch of fear, famine and loss of property, life and crops. Give good news to those who patiently endure – who, when faced with a disaster, say: Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will all return.” [Al-Baqarah] 2:155-156

Tawheed Al-Asma Wa-Siffat

What this category means is to affirm those Names and Attributes of Allah that He has informed us about in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ. At the same time, one must also negate from Allah those Names or Attributes that Allah Himself negated from Himself in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ.

Moreover, there are four important things to stay away from when discussing the Names and Attributes of Allah:

- 1 Outright denial of Allah’s Names and Attributes, whether all of them or some of them.
- 2 Misinterpreting the meanings of Allah’s Names or Attributes, like giving metaphorical meanings to some of them.
- 3 Attempting to understand or explain how the realities of certain Attributes of Allah are.
- 4 Resembling or likening any of Allah’s Names or Attributes to those of His creation.



Allah says in the Qur'an:

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ سَمَاءً سَمَوَاتٍ مَّزِينًا وَمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ رُحُومَ الْجِبَالِ وَالْجِبَالُ مَخْلُوعَاتٌ أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا مَّزِينًا وَمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ جِبَالٌ رُحُومٌ أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ لَيْلًا مَّزِينًا وَمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ نَارٌ مَّزِينًا أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"Allah has the Most Beautiful Names. So call upon Him by them, and keep away from those who practice deviation concerning His Names. They will be punished for what they used to do." [Al-A'raf 7:180]

لَا شَيْءٌ مِّثْلَهُ شَيْءٌ يَخْتَفَىٰ لَئِنَّكَ أَتَىٰكَ الْبَصِيرَاتُ

"There is nothing like Him, for He [alone] is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing." [Al-Shura 42:11]

So based on this, we understand that Allah has the best of Names and loftiest of Attributes. These Names and Attributes tell us about who Allah is, and as such we affirm that they are real and that their apparent meanings are actually intended. But it is important to remember that these Names and Attributes do not resemble those of Allah's creation.

For example, Allah is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing; He speaks and He laughs; He is above His creation and He also descends in the last third of every night. All of these Names and Attributes have been mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and we believe in each one of them and in their apparent meanings, but without attempting to understand how their realities are, and without resembling them to the attributes of Allah's creation. By doing this, we give Allah His due right and accept what He has informed us about Himself in the manner in which He intended, paving the way for fulfilling the very purpose behind which Allah described Himself to us: in order for us to venerate Him and worship Him in the manner in which He is pleased with.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لِمَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَئِمَّا تَدْعُواهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْهَا تَخْرُجُونَ اللَّهُ يَخْتَارُ مَا يُؤْتِيهِ الْغَنِيُّ شَرًّا وَلَا يَفْتِنُهُ وَلَا يَتَّخِذُ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْكَافِرِينَ
 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لِمَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَئِمَّا تَدْعُواهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْهَا تَخْرُجُونَ اللَّهُ يَخْتَارُ مَا يُؤْتِيهِ الْغَنِيُّ شَرًّا وَلَا يَفْتِنُهُ وَلَا يَتَّخِذُ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْكَافِرِينَ
 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لِمَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَئِمَّا تَدْعُواهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْهَا تَخْرُجُونَ اللَّهُ يَخْتَارُ مَا يُؤْتِيهِ الْغَنِيُّ شَرًّا وَلَا يَفْتِنُهُ وَلَا يَتَّخِذُ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْكَافِرِينَ

“He is Allah – there is no god [worthy of worship] except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah – there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher [of all], the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him [in worship]! He is Allah: the Creator, the Inventor, the Shaper. He alone has the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth [constantly] glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.”
 [Al-Hashr 59:22-24]

Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah

This is the most important category of Tawheed without question; Tawheed of worship. It is due to this category that Allah created us, sent the prophets and messengers, made it the condition to attain eternal salvation and admission into Paradise.

So what exactly is Tawheed of worship?

Tawheed of worship is to affirm that Allah alone deserves to be worshiped without any partner. So it is not sufficient to affirm that Allah exists, or that He is the Creator and Supreme being without also affirming His sole right to be worshipped alone without any partner.

Believing in the Oneness of Allah means to realize that all prayer and worship should be exclusively for Allah. Some religions, even though they believe in “One God”, do not make all of their worship and prayers for Him alone. They also direct their prayers and

worship to beings that are not All-Knowing and All-Powerful. From this we understand that the underlying difference between Islam and all other religions or philosophies is not over whether Allah exists or not, or whether He is the only Lord and Creator or not. But rather the underlying difference is over whether Allah is the only One who deserves to be worshipped alone without any partners or not.

So how do you convince someone of the truth of this concept, i.e. Tawheed of worship?

The best way to do so is by following the method Allah has used in the Qur'an, which is to demonstrate how Tawheed of Lordship necessitates Tawheed of Worship.

How? Basically, the Mushrikun whom Allah addresses throughout the Qur'an were people who understood and even believed in Allah as the Lord and Creator, meaning that they affirmed the Tawheed of Lordship. So Allah uses this fact to prove to them that it is only therefore rational that you also affirm the Tawheed of worship, because Tawheed of Lordship necessitates Tawheed of worship.

In simple words: how can you claim that there is only One Creator who created everything and then when it comes to worship, you don't worship that One Creator alone, but rather direct your prayers and worship to others, or associates partners with Him in His worship? It's not logically acceptable to do so.



Allah says in the Qur'an:

أَمْ يَتَّبِعُونَ آلَ عَادٍ الَّذِينَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ قَدْ أَنذَرَهُمْ بَارِئًا فَكَفَرُوا بِهِمْ ثُمَّ حَمَلْنَا آلَ عَادَ السَّيْلَ كَمَا يُنحَى السَّيْلُ فَمَا تَبِخْتُمْ لَهُمْ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْغَمُّ أَن سَأَلُوا فِي آيَاتِنَا مِن دُونِهَا قُلْ إِن كُمْ تُحِبُّونَ آلَ عَادَ فَآتُواهُم مَّا يُسْأَلُونَ مِن دُونِهَا قُلْ إِن كُمْ تُحِبُّونَ آلَ عَادَ فَآتُواهُم مَّا يُسْأَلُونَ مِن دُونِهَا قُلْ إِن كُمْ تُحِبُّونَ آلَ عَادَ فَآتُواهُم مَّا يُسْأَلُونَ مِن دُونِهَا

“And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will definitely say, ‘Allah!’ Say, ‘Praise be to Allah!’ In fact, most of them do not know.” [Luqman 31:25]

In fact, Allah reminds them of how they turn to Him for help, supplicating to Him alone without any partners to save them from drowning:

أَمْ يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ إِذْ نَادَى نوحٌ رَّبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي قَارِبًا وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي قَارِبًا وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي قَارِبًا وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

“If they happen to be aboard a ship [caught in a storm], they cry out to Allah alone in sincere devotion. But as soon as He delivers them safely to shore, they associate [others with Him once again].” [Al-Ankabut 29:65]

That’s because this belief in Allah as the only Lord and Creator automatically necessitates that He alone is the One who can hear our prayers and grant us what we seek His help for. Thus, belief in the Tawheed of Lordship automatically necessitates belief in the Tawheed of Worship.

This is why when the messengers were denied by their people after they called upon them to worship Allah alone, they appealed to the one thing that they knew they could not deny:

أَمْ يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ إِذْ نَادَى نوحٌ رَّبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي قَارِبًا وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي قَارِبًا وَخَلِّصْهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

“The messengers asked them: Is there any doubt about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth? He is inviting you in order to forgive your sins.” [Ibrahim 14:10]

What Is Worship?

Now that we understand the significance of Tawheed of worship, which is to affirm that Allah alone deserves to be worshiped without any partner. This leads us to another very important question: what exactly is meant by worship?

Worship in Islam is to basically obey Allah with submission and humility, out of love for Him and wanting to get near to Him. **The well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, gives us a very beautiful definition of worship in Islam. He says :**

“Ibadah (worship) is a comprehensive term comprising of everything that Allah loves and is pleased with – whether in sayings or actions, outward or inward. So prayer, fasting, performing Hajj, speaking the truth, fulfilling trusts, being dutiful to parents, keeping ties of relations, fulfilling contracts, commanding the good, forbidding the evil, waging Jihad against the disbelievers and hypocrites, showing kindness to neighbours, orphans, the poor, wayfarers, slaves and animals, supplication, remembrance of Allah, reciting the Qur’an, and other similar acts are considered worship. Also, love for Allah and His Messenger, fear for Allah, turning to Him, sincerity for Him, patience over His decisions, gratitude for His blessings, satisfaction over His decrees, reliance in Him, hoping for His mercy, fearing His punishment, and other similar acts are also worship of Allah. That is because worship of Allah is the ultimate goal that is beloved and satisfying to Him for which He created the creation.”

From this, we learn that worship in Islam is a very broad concept that pretty much covers all aspects of our lives. We also learn that worship can be divided into four categories:

- 1 **Bodily acts of worship:** those that you carry out physically with your body parts, like prayer, fasting, performing Hajj, doing acts of kindness to others, and so on.
- 2 **Verbal acts of worship:** those that you perform through your tongue, like supplication to Allah, verbal remembrance of Him, reciting the Qur'an, speaking the truth, and so on
- 3 **Financial acts of worship:** those that you carry out with your wealth, like Zakah, charity, feeding the poor, spending on those under your care, and so on.
- 4 **Spiritual acts of worship:** those that you perform with your heart – which is the essence of all other acts of worship since it is the heart where they emanate from – like love for Allah, fear for Him, hoping for His mercy, reliance in Him, and so on.

All of these are different kinds of acts of worship that a Muslim performs in his or her daily life. However, it must be noted that there are two conditions that must be met in order for any act of worship to be accepted by Allah:

- 1 **Sincerity of intention:** Allah only accepts an act of worship when it is performed sincerely for Him without associating others. This includes making sure that we don't intend with our worship to please others or show-off to others, or that we don't have any worldly intentions when performing an act of worship.
- 2 **Adherence to what Allah and His Messenger have legislated:** Allah only accepts an act of worship that He and His Messenger have legislated for us. So any act of worship that we innovate and introduce into the religion is not accepted. We must make sure that our acts of worship are based on the method that the Prophet ﷺ has taught us.

Outlining these two conditions, Allah says:

مَنْ يَتْلُكُ مَا يَرْجُو لِيَأْتِيَهُمْ رَبُّهُمُ يَكُونُوا فِي سَعْيِهِمْ لَنُورٍ يَدْعُونَ بِهِ يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُمْ سُرْعًا وَلَا يُسْمِعُ كَيْدَ الَّذِينَ يُكِيدُونَ
 “So whoever hopes for the meeting with their Lord, let them do righteous deeds and associate none in the worship of their Lord.” [Al-Kahf 18:110]

Righteous deeds are in reference to the second condition and not associating anyone in the worship of Allah is in reference to the first condition.



The Negative Effects of Disobeying Allah

Since worship in Islam is to obey Allah with submission and humility, out of love for Him and wanting to get near to Him, it naturally follows that disobeying Allah and not submitting to Him is something that negatively affects one's relationship with Allah and hinders his or her worship of Him.

Disobedience of Allah varies from minor to major types. Minor sins are those for which no punishment has been specified in this world or the hereafter. On the other hand, major sins are those for which specific punishments have been mentioned either in this world or in the hereafter, like murder, theft, consuming Riba (interest or usury), and so on.

Minor sins are forgivable through a variety of different ways, like seeking Allah's forgiveness, doing certain good deeds that wipe out sins, like giving in charity, and so on. On the other hand, major sins can only be forgiven by turning to Allah in sincere repentance.

A SINCERE REPENTANCE MUST INCLUDE:

- ✓ **Stopping the sin immediately.**
- ✓ **Having regret and remorse for committing the sin**
- ✓ **Having a strong determination to never return to the sin again.**
- ✓ **And in the case of the rights of others, returning their rights to them.**

If one dies not having repented for a major sin, it is feared that he or she will face Allah's punishment in the hereafter. However, whether they are punished or not, if they happen to be believers who were people of Tawheed, not dying upon Shirk, their punishment in the Hellfire will not be eternal, and Allah will eventually admit them into Paradise.

This demonstrates the virtue of Tawheed and the grave danger of Shirk. Shirk is the only sin that is unforgivable, meaning that if a person does not repent from it before death, not only is it feared that they will face punishment in the hereafter like those who commit any other major sin, but it is guaranteed that their punishment will be eternal and that Allah will never forgive them.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

لَا يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ يُخَيِّرُ أَحْمَدًا لَمْ يُغْفِرْ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَّا مَنْ يَشَاءُ لِيُخَيِّرَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ
"Indeed, Allah does not forgive associating others with Him, but forgives anything else of whoever He wills." [Al-Nisa 4:48]

What is meant here by Allah not forgiving the one who commits Shirk is if he or she does not repent before death, as Allah says:

قَدْ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ لِيُخَيِّرَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ
"Tell the disbelievers that if they desist, their past will be forgiven." [Al-Anfal 8:38]

This proves that as long as a disbeliever and Mushrik (polytheist) repents before death, Allah will forgive them and save them from eternal punishment in the hereafter. But if they don't, then there's no chance of being forgiven in the hereafter.

Look at it this way: an employee at a manufacturing company decides to give away some critical undisclosed information about an upcoming product to a competing company. If the company comes to know about his actions, they would never forgive him and fire him right away. On the other hand, another employee decides to steal some office supplies and is caught. The company would forgive him and warn him not to do it again.

Thus, Allah has made some sins forgivable, but only one unforgivable: Shirk, because worship is the sole right of Allah, and to direct it to others is severe injustice.

أَيُّهَا ابْنُ أَخِي نَذِرُكَ أَنْ تَشْرِكَ بِعَلَمِ اللَّهِ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِنَّ شَرَّ مَا كُنْتُ رَأَيْتُ يُعْرَفُ بِالشِّرْكِ
 And when Luqman said to his son, while advising him: O my dear son! Never associate anything with Allah [in worship], for associating [others with Him] is truly the greatest injustice."
 [Luqman 31:13]



Disbelief And Hypocrisy

Due to the immense status of Tawheed in the sight of Allah, there are certain things that Allah has warned us of that corrupt one's Tawheed. The most dangerous of these is Shirk, both the major and minor of it, as previously discussed.

Besides Shirk, among the things that corrupt one's Tawheed is Kufr (disbelief) and Nifaq (hypocrisy).

As for Kufr, it is to simply disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger or anything that they have sent us of the religion of Islam. **Expounding on this, the well-known 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah says:**

“Kufr is to disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger, whether that is accompanied by denial or it is not accompanied by denial but rather doubt, or turning away from Iman out of jealousy or arrogance, or because one is following whims and desires that prevent one from following the message. So Kufr is the attribute of anyone who rejects something that Allah has commanded us to believe in, after news of that has reached him, whether he rejects it in his heart without uttering it, or he utters those words of rejection without believing it in his heart, or he does both; or he does an action which is described in the texts as putting one beyond the pale of Islam.”

So based on this, Kufr can be denial with one's heart, but it can also be something one says or does that has been classified as Kufr and causing one to leave Islam. An example of a statement that implies Kufr is to ridicule something in Islam.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ثُمَّ قَالُوا أَتُؤْتِينَا آيَاتٍ كَذِبًا وَمَا نُبَيِّنُكَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ

“Say: Was it Allah, His revelations, and His Messenger that you ridiculed?” Make no excuses! You have disbelieved after your belief.” [Al-Tawbah 9:65-66]

An example of an action that implies Kufr is to aide the disbelievers and enemies of Islam in their fight against Muslims.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيًّا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيٌّ بَعْضًا مَّا كَانُوا كُفْرًا وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“O you who believe! Take neither the Jews nor the Christians as allies—they are allies of each other. Whoever does so will be counted as one of them. Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.” [Al-Ma'idah 5:51]

However, it should be noted that although something is classified as being Kufr, the doer is not automatically labelled as a Kafir (disbeliever), but rather more investigation and explanation is required before one is considered a Kafir who has left the fold of Islam.

As for Nifaq, it is to be a hypocrite with respect to one's belief. So a Munafiq (hypocrite) is one who conceals Kufr while making an outward show of being a Muslim. Allah has warned us of the hypocrites in the Qur'an more than He has warned us of any other group. That's because the danger of the hypocrites is far greater than the disbelievers who are open enemies to Islam due to the former being in the ranks of the Muslims.

Allah says concerning the hypocrites:

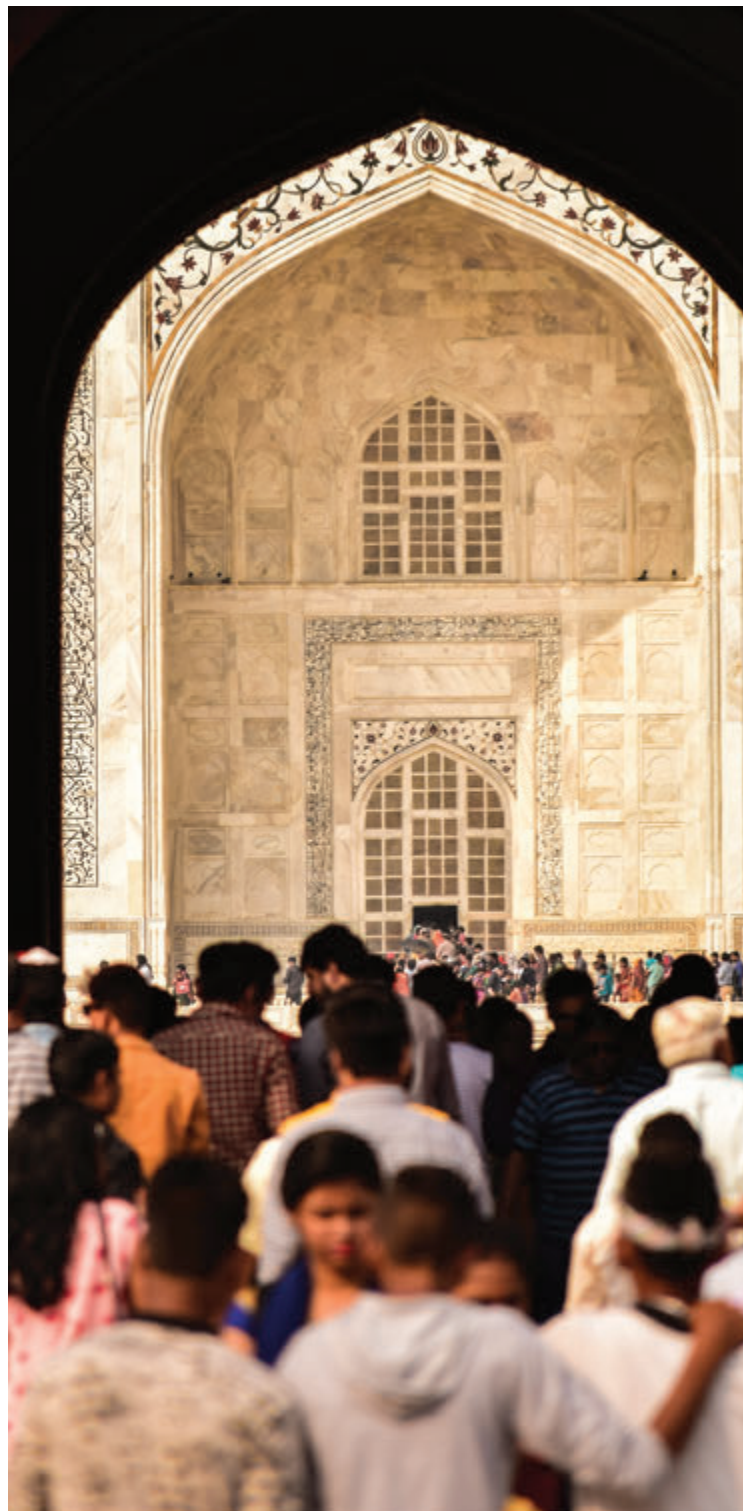
هٰؤَآلَآءِ سِجِّدَاتُ يَدِيں اَعْتَدَ لِمَن كَفَرَ اِنَّهُمْ سِجِّدَاتٌ لِّمَن كَفَرُوْا

“They are the enemy, so beware of them. May Allah condemn them! How can they be deluded [from the truth]?”
[Al-Munafiqun 63:4]

Although the hypocrites are not considered believers, we have to treat them as Muslims in general. That is because judging what is in the hearts is exclusively for Allah to do. However, Allah and His Messenger ﷺ mentioned several characteristics of the hypocrites so that the Muslim community remains cautious of their evil and harm. Some of their most prominent characteristics are:

- Lying
- Treachery
- Deceit
- Resorting to foul language when disputing.

Therefore, the Muslim should be extra careful to avoid such evil characteristics so that he or she is not seen as a hypocrite in the sight of Allah.



Affixing Tawheed In The Heart

Tawheed is a tree that grows in the believer's heart. It exists in the heart before it branches out into words and actions. Its growth and beauty increase as one performs acts of obedience to Allah, thereby increasing one's love for his Lord, his fear of Him and his hope for His reward and forgiveness.

It is therefore of utmost importance that a Muslim pays attention to the status of Tawheed in his or her heart, making sure that it remains firm at all times.

There are many things that cause Tawheed to become firm in the heart. Among them are the following:

1. Performing acts of obedience or good deeds seeking the reward of Allah.
2. Abstaining from committing sins fearing the punishment of Allah.
3. Contemplating on the creation of Allah in the heavens and earth.
4. Learning about the Names and Attributes of Allah, their requirements, their effects and their indications of the exaltedness and perfection that belongs to Allah.
5. Seeking beneficial Islamic knowledge and acting according to it.
6. Reciting the Qur'an while pondering over and contemplating its meanings and what Allah intends by His words.
7. Getting closer to Allah by performing Nawafil (extra acts of worship) after completing the obligatory acts.
8. Continual remembrance of Allah under all circumstances, with one's tongue and heart.
9. Giving precedence to what Allah loves over what you love when you are overtaken by your desires.
10. Contemplating both the hidden and open blessings of Allah thoughtfully, and pondering over His generosity and benevolence to His creation.
11. Making the heart soft and subdued before Allah.

12. Secluding with Allah when He descends during the last part of the night while reciting His Book, standing in complete humbleness before Him, and then concluding by repenting and asking for His forgiveness.
13. Sitting with the sincere lovers and worshipers of Allah so that one can benefit from the most fruitful of their words.
14. Staying away from every single thing that acts as a barrier between the heart and Allah and His pleasure.
15. Abstaining from excessive speech, food and socializing with people.
16. Loving for your Muslim brother or sister what you love for yourself of good things, and struggling to train yourself to get used to that.
17. Freeing the heart of hatred for fellow Muslims, as well as grudges, envy, pride, arrogance and self-admiration.
18. Being satisfied and content with the various decrees of Allah.
19. Being grateful to Allah at times of ease and having patience at times of difficulty and afflictions.
20. Returning to Allah in repentance at times of disobedience.
21. Performing as many righteous good deeds as one can, like being dutiful to parents, having good manners and etiquette, maintaining kinship ties, feeding the poor, and so on.
22. Adhering firmly to the Sunnah and following in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ in all things, small or great.
23. Ensuring that one's food comes from Halal sources.
24. Commanding all that is good and forbidding all that is evil.

May Allah allow us to be sincere Muslims, ameen.

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