22704 - Being Successful in Life

the question

How to can one obtain success and prosperity in this world and the hereafterHereafter.What kind of success or prosperity that does iIslam want the ummah iIslamto gain in this world.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Peace of mind, contentment, happiness and freedom from worries and anxiety… these are what everyone wants, and these are the ways in which people can have a good life and find complete happiness and joy. There are religious means of achieving this, and natural and practical means, but no one can combine all of them except the believers; although other people may achieve some of them, they will miss out on others.

Here follows a summary of the means of achieving this aim for which everyone is striving. In some cases, those who achieve many of them will live a joyful life and a good life; in other cases, those who fail to achieve all of them will live a life of misery and hardship. And there are others which are in between, according to the means they are able to attain. These means include the following:

1 – Faith and righteous deeds:

This is the greatest and most fundamental of means. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whoever works righteousness — whether male or female — while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter).” [al-Nahl 16:97]

Allah tells us and promises us that whoever combines faith with righteous deeds will have a good life and a good reward in this world and in the Hereafter.

The reason for this is clear: those who believe in Allah – with sincere faith that motivates them to do righteous deeds that change hearts and attitudes and guides them to the straight path in this world and the Hereafter – follow principles and guidelines by means of which they deal with everything that happens to them, be it the causes of happiness and excitement or the causes of anxiety, worry and grief.

They deal with the things that they like by accepting them and giving thanks for them, and using them in good ways. When they deal with them in this manner, it creates in them a sense of excitement and the hope that it will continue and that they will be rewarded for their gratitude, which is more important than the good things that happen to them. And they deal with bad things, worries and distress by resisting those that they can resist, alleviating those that they can alleviate, and bearing with goodly patience those that they cannot avoid. Thus as a result of the bad things they gain a lot of benefits, experience, strength, patience and hope of reward, which are more important and which diminish the hardships they have undergone and replace them with happiness and hope for the bounty and reward of Allah. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) expressed this in a saheeh hadeeth (authentic report) in which he said: “How wonderful is the situation of the believer, for all his affairs are good. If something good happens to him, he gives thanks for it and that is good for him; if something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, and that is good for him. This does not apply to anyone but the believer.” (Narrated by Muslim, no. 2999).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us that the believer is always gaining and the reward for his deeds is always multiplying, no matter what happens to him, good or bad.

2 – Being kind to people in word and deed, and all kinds of doing good. This is one of the means of removing worry, distress and anxiety. By this means Allah wards off worries and distress from the righteous and immoral alike, but the believer has the greater share of this, and is distinguished by the fact that his kindness to others stems from sincerity and the hope of reward, so Allah makes it

easy for him to be kind to others because of the hope that this will bring good things and ward off bad things, by means of his sincerity and hope of reward. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“There is no good in most of their secret talks save (in) him who orders Sadaqah (charity in Allah’s Cause), or Ma‘roof (Islamic Monotheism and all the good and righteous deeds which Allah has ordained), or conciliation between mankind; and he who does this, seeking the good Pleasure of Allah, We shall give him a great reward.”[al-Nisa 4:114]

Part of this great reward is relief from worry, distress, troubles, etc.

3 – Another of the means of warding off anxiety that stems from nervous tension and being preoccupied with disturbing thoughts is to occupy oneself with good deeds or seeking beneficial knowledge. This will distract one from dwelling on the matters that are causing anxiety. In this way a person may forget about the things that are making him worried and distressed, and he may become happy and more energetic. This is another means that believers and others have in common, but the believer is distinguished by his faith, sincerity and hope of reward when he occupies himself with the knowledge that he is learning or teaching, or with the good deeds that he is doing.

The work with which he occupies himself should be something that he likes and enjoys, for that is more likely to produce the desired results. And Allah knows best.

4 – Another thing that may ward off worry and anxiety is focusing all one’s thoughts on the present day, and not worrying about the future or grieving about the past. Hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sought refuge with Allah from worry and regret, from regret for things in the past which cannot be put right or changed, and worry which may come because of fear for the future. So one should focus only on the present day, and focus one's efforts on getting things right today. If a person is focused on the present, he will do things properly and forget about worry and regret.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said a du’a (supplication) or taught a

du’a to his ummah (followers), as well as urging them to seek the help of Allah and hope for His bounty, he was also urging them to strive to attain the thing they were praying for through their own efforts and to forget about the thing which they were praying would be warded off from them because du’a (supplication) must be accompanied by action. So a person must strive to attain that which will benefit him in worldly and spiritual terms, and ask his Lord to make his efforts successful, and he should seek His help in this, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Strive for that which will benefit you and seek the help of Allah, and do not be helpless. If anything (bad) happens to you, do not say, ‘If only I had done such-and-such, then such-and-such would have happened.’ Rather you should say, ‘Qaddara Allah wa ma sha a fa’ala (Allah decrees, and what He wills He does),’ for (the words) ‘If only’ open the door to the Shaytan.” (Narrated by Muslim). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) connected the matter of striving to achieve good things with the matter of seeking the help of Allah and not giving in to feelings of helplessness which are a harmful kind of laziness, and with the matter of accepting things in the past which are over and done with, and acknowledging that the will and decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass. He described matters as being of two types:

1 – Matters which a person may strive to achieve or to achieve whatever he can of them, or to ward them off or alleviate them. In such cases a person must strive and make the effort, and also seek the help of Allah.

2 – Matters where such is not possible, so he must have peace of mind, accept them and submit to Allah’s will.

Undoubtedly paying attention to this principle will bring happiness and relieve worry and distress.

5 – One of the greatest means of feeling content and relaxed and of acquiring peace of mind is to remember Allah a great deal (dhikr). That has a great effect in bringing contentment and peace of mind, and relieving worry and distress. Allah says:

“Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.” [al-Ra’d 13:28]

Remembering Allah (dhikr) has a great effect in achieving this aim because it has a special

influence and because of the hope that it brings of reward.

6 – Another of the means of bringing happiness and relieving worry and distress is striving to eliminate the things that cause worry and to achieve the things that bring happiness. That may be done by forgetting about bad things in the past which cannot be changed, and realizing that dwelling on them is a waste of time. So a person must strive to stop himself from thinking of them, and also strive to stop himself from feeling anxious about the future and the things that he may imagine of poverty, fear and other bad things that he thinks may happen to him in the future. He should realize that the future is something that is unknown, he cannot know what good or bad things are going to happen to him. That is in the hand of the Almighty, the Most Wise, and all that His slaves can do is to strive to attain the good things and to ward off the bad things. A person should realize that if he diverts his thoughts from worrying about his future and puts his trust in his Lord to take care of his situation, and puts his mind at rest concerning this, if he does this, then his heart will be at peace and his situation will improve and he will be relieved of worry and anxiety.

One of the most effective ways of dealing with worries about the future is to recite this du'a which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to recite:

"Allahumma aslih li deeni alladhi huwa 'ismatu amri, wa aslih li dunyaya allati fiha ma'ashi, wa aslih li akhirati allati ilayha ma'adi, waj'al al-hayata ziyadatan li fi kulli khayr, wa'l-mawta rahatan li min kulli sharr (O Allah, correct my religious commitment which is the foundation of my life, and correct my worldly affairs in which is my livelihood, and grant me good in the Hereafter to which is my return. Make my life a means of accumulating good, and make death a respite for me from all evil)." (Narrated by Muslim, 2720).

And he said, "Allahumma rahmataka arju fa la takilni ila nafsi tarfata 'aynin wa aslih li shani kullahu, la ilaha illa anta (O Allah, for Your mercy I hope, so do not abandon me to myself even for a moment. And correct all my affairs. There is no god but You)." (Narrated by Abu Dawood with a saheeh isnad [chain of transmitters], no. 5090; classed as hasan/good by al-Albani in Saheeh al-Kalim al-Tayyib, p.49).

If a person utters these du’as, which ask that his spiritual and worldly affairs may be set right or corrected, with proper presence of mind and sincerity of intention, whilst striving to achieve this, Allah will grant him what he has prayed for, hoped for and striven for, and He will turn his worry into joy and happiness.

7 – If a person experiences anxiety and distress because of a disaster, then one of the most effective means of relieving himself of that is to think of the worst scenario to which that may lead, and try to accept that. When he has done this, then he should try to alleviate it as much as possible. By means of this acceptance and these efforts, he will relieve himself of his worries and distress, and instead of worrying he will strive to bring about good things and to deal with whatever he can of the bad things. If he is faced with things that cause fear or the possibility of sickness or poverty, then he should deal with this by striving to make himself accept it, or something even worse, with contentment, because by making himself accept the worst-case scenario, he lessens the impact of the thing and makes it seem less terrible, especially if he occupies himself with efforts to ward it off as much as he can. Thus as well as striving to achieve something good which will distract him from his worries about calamity, he will also renew his strength to resist bad things, and put his trust and reliance in Allah. Undoubtedly these matters are of great benefit in attaining happiness and peace of mind, as well as bringing the hope of reward in this world and in the Hereafter. This is something which is well known from the experience of many who have tried it.

8 – Steadfastness of heart and not being disturbed about the imaginary things that bad thoughts may bring to mind. For when a person gives in to his imagination and lets his mind be disturbed by these thoughts, such as fear of disease and the like, or anger and confusion stirred up by some grievous matter, or the expectation of bad things and the loss of good things, it will fill him with worries, distress, mental and physical illness and nervous breakdowns, which will have a bad effect on him and which causes a great deal of harm, as many people have seen. But when a person depends on Allah and puts his trust in Him, and does not give in to his imagination or let bad thoughts overwhelm him, and he relies on Allah and has hope of His bounty, this wards off his worries and distress, and relieves him of a great deal of mental and physical sickness. It gives

indescribable strength, comfort and happiness to the heart. How many hospitals are filled with the mentally sick victims of illusions and harmful imagination; how often have these things had an effect upon the hearts of many strong people, let alone the weak ones; how often have they led to foolishness and insanity.

It should be noted that your life will follow your train of thought. If your thoughts are of things that will bring you benefit in your spiritual or worldly affairs, then your life will be good and happy. Otherwise it will be the opposite.

The person who is safe from all of this is the one who is protected by Allah and helped by Him to strive to achieve that which will benefit and strengthen the heart and ward off anxiety. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him.” [al-Talaq 65:3]

i.e., He will be sufficient for all that is worrying him in his spiritual and worldly affairs. The one who puts his trust in Allah will have strength in his heart and will not be affected by anything he imagines or be disturbed by events, because he knows that these are the result of vulnerable human nature and of weakness and fear that have no basis. He also knows that Allah has guaranteed complete sufficiency to those who put their trust in Him. So he trusts in Allah and finds peace of mind in His promise, and thus his worry and anxiety are dispelled; hardship is turned to ease, sadness is turned to joy, fear is turned to peace. We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound, and to bless us with strength and steadfastness of heart, and complete trust, for Allah has guaranteed all good things to those who put their trust in Him, and has guaranteed to ward off all bad and harmful things from them.

If bad things happen or there is the fear of such, then you should count the many blessings that you are still enjoying, both spiritual and worldly, and compare them with the bad things that have happened, for when you compare them you will see the many blessings that you are enjoying, and this will make the bad things appear less serious.

See al-Wasail al-Mufeedah li’l-Hayat al-Sa’eedah by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Sa’di

Ibn al-Qayyim summed fifteen ways through which Allah may dispel worries and regret. These are as follows:

1- Tawheed al-Ruboobiyyah (belief in the Oneness of Divine Lordship)

2- Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah (belief in the Oneness of the Divine nature)

3- Tawheed of knowledge and belief (i.e., Tawheed al-Asma' wa'l_Sifaat, belief in the Oneness of the Divine names and attributes)

4- Thinking of Allah as being above doing any injustice to His slaves, and above punishing anyone for no cause on the part of the slave that would require such punishment.

5- The person's acknowledging that he is the one who has done wrong.

6- Beseeching Allah by means of the things that are most beloved to Him, which are His names and attributes. Two of His names that encompass the meanings of all other names and attributes are al-Hayy (the Ever-Living) and al-Qayyoom (the Eternal).

7- Seeking the help of Allah Alone.

8- Affirming one's hope in Him.

9- Truly putting one's trust in Him and leaving matters to Him, acknowledging that one's forelock is in His hand and that He does as He wills, that His will is forever executed and that He is just in all that He decrees.

10- Letting one's heart wander in the garden of the Quran, seeking consolation in it from every calamity, seeking healing in it from all diseases of the heart, so that it will bring comfort to his grief and healing for his worries and distress.

11- Seeking forgiveness.

12- Repentance.

13- Jihad.

14-Salah (prayer).

15-Declaring that he has no power and no strength, and leaving matters to the One in Whose hand they are.

We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound from worries and to relieve us of distress and anxiety, for He is the All-Hearing, Ever-Responsive, and He is the Ever-Living, Eternal.

See Alhomoom – Dealing with Worries and Stress, in the Books section of this site.

And Allah knows best.

May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and Companions.