83997 - Not Praying Causes Distress and Anxiety

the question

I am a 23 year old girl, and to be honest I do not pray and if I do I do not offer all the obligatory prayers. I also listen to music, but this puts me in a bad mood and Allah is watching.I want to pray. I want to obey Allah and I fear Him, I am proud of being a Muslim, My God is Allah alone with no partner, and I love the prophet Muhammad and his (Seera) Way of life, and it affects me when I hear about it. All praise be to Allah Who honoured me with an ‘Umrah this year, and I was happy for this, but I feel I am being hard-hearted and that there is no difference between me and the disbelievers because I do not offer prayers. I have tried so many times to keep on praying but I do not know why this keeps happening with me, knowing that I have not been praying for a very long time and I feel ignorant of so many Islamic issues. I feel that Allah will not accept any of my deeds, prayers, Zakat, ‘Umrah, or any other Islamic duty, I feel that my destiny is surely in hell. I need someone who takes my hand and advises me and helps me leave this loss, I hate being in this case!!

Moreover, there is another problem; I feel that I missed fasting some days of Ramadan with no excuse to fast not!!
Frankly I am not sure if those days were of Ramadan or Shawwal, as it is a habit in our home to fast the six of Shawwal every year so I am confused. This problem has happened to me when I was far from the path of Allah, I know that whoever breaks his fast without an excuse one day of Ramadan, Allah does not accept his fasting ever, and he has to offer penance, so what shall I do now?
Please help me and enlighten me, please, I am very desperate, may Allah add this to your good deeds and reward you.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is essential first of all to define the cause of the problem, then you can go ahead and deal with it. If you ask us to help you define it, we would say that the problem is in yourself and not in anything else. The help that others offer you will never be of benefit unless you take steps towards salvation.

The feelings that you express in your question indicate that the elements of righteousness are present in your case, for the believer is the one who takes stock of himself and rebukes himself, and it seems that you are doing that.

The believer is afraid of his shortcomings and sins, and sees them as a mountain that is about to fall on him. It seems that you feel this way too.

The believer holds his Islam and faith in high esteem, and is proud to belong to this great religion, and he loves his Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) – and your letter shows this clearly.

So how can all these qualities be present in one who falls short in the greatest religious duty, which is prayer?

We do not have any explanation for that except poor self-management and a lack of self control. Otherwise, performing the prayer does not take up a great deal of effort or time. It is only a few minutes in which a person is alone with his Lord, asking Him to fulfil his needs and complaining to Him the heavy burden of his worldly concerns, and expressing to Him his longing for Him and His mercy.

If we cannot put up with making the commitment of these few minutes, then we do not think that we could ever succeed in our lives. Self-discipline requires commitment and resolve, and our Lord has not burdened us Muslims with more than we can bear, rather He has not even burdened us with anything that is too difficult for us; He loves to accept our repentance and make things easier for us.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you”

[al-Baqarah 2:185]

“Allah wishes to make clear (what is lawful and what is unlawful) to you, and to show you the ways of those before you, and accept your repentance, and Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.

Allah wishes to accept your repentance, but those who follow their lusts, wish that you (believers) should deviate tremendously away (from the Right Path).

Allah wishes to lighten (the burden) for you; and man was created weak”

[al-Nisa’ 4:26-28]

Prayer is a mercy that Allah has enjoined upon us by His bounty and kindness. The one who adheres to it and prays regularly and properly will see the bounty of Allah to us which He has decreed for us and will understand that the one who is truly deprived is the one who deprives himself of the joy of contact with Allah, may He be exalted.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Prayer is the best of prescribed things, so the one who is able to do a lot of it, let him do a lot of it.”

Narrated by al-Tabaraani (1/84); classed as saheeh (authentic) by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Targheeb (390).

See what Allah says after the verses in which He enjoined purification for prayer (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah does not want to place you in difficulty, but He wants to purify you, and to complete His Favour to you that you may be thankful”

[al-Maa'idah 5:6]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), whom you love and whose Seerah (life) you love, says: “My delight has been made in prayer.” Narrated by al-Nasaa’i (3940); classed as hasan (sound) by al-Haafiz ibn Hajar in al-Talkhees al-Habeer (3/116) and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Nasaa’i.

How can the believer agree to miss out on this goodness and these blessings?

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Alas! How can a person spend his time and live his life deprived of smelling this fragrance, and leave this world as he entered it without having tasted the best that it has to offer, and having lived in it like a dumb animal, departing from it like one who is bankrupt. He lived a life of helplessness, he died a death of sadness and his resurrection will be loss and regret. O Allah, to You be praise, to You we complain, You are the One Whose help we seek, You we ask for aid, in You we put our trust, and there is no power and no strength except with You.

Tareeq al-Hijratayn (p. 327).

I am not saying this to you in order to increase the despair that you are feeling, but so that you will strive to rid yourself of it. It has only befallen you because of your failure to perform the easiest of duties, so you should know that you are more incapable of doing others.

You should not leave any room in your life for despair with regard to Allah. You must understand that He hates those who despair (interpretation of the meaning): “And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord except those who are astray?” [al-Hijr 15:56] and He loves those of His slaves who are optimistic of His mercy and grace. By His vast kindness He forgives bad deeds and pardons mistakes, indeed He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds; for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful

And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds; then verily, he repents towards Allah with true repentance”

[al-Furqaan 25:68-70]”

A wise man said: “Nothing brings hope but good deeds.” You will never escape the trap of despair into which the shaytaan has caused you to fall unless you start to strive and try to commit yourself to righteousness, even if you fall short at the beginning.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and never give up hope of Allah’s Mercy. Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve”

[Yoosuf 12:87]

Hope means that a person must work and strive hard for whatever he hopes for, but despair means that he will be sluggish and slow. The best that people can hope for is the bounty, kindness, mercy and grace of Allah.

“Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve” – because of their kufr (disbelief), they think that the mercy of Allah is unlikely, and His mercy is far from them. So do not be like the kaafirs (non-Muslims). This indicates that the more faith a person has, the more hope he will have of the mercy and grace of Allah. Tafseer Ibn Sa’di.

The first thing you must do is to become eager to offer prayers regularly and on time, as you would feel eager for other worldly matters such as food, drink, study, marriage and so on. Every action is preceded by concern and thought. One of the early generation strove hard to do many naafil (voluntary) prayers, until Thaabit al-Banaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I strove hard to do qiyaam al-layl (supererogatory prayers offered at night) for twenty years, and I enjoyed it for the next twenty years.

This thinking and concern will not be sufficient unless you focus on means that will help you to

pray regularly and think about ways to make yourself adhere to that which Allah has enjoined. Man possesses a great ability to choose the means that will help him to do what he wants.

Strive to get up straightaway, as soon as you hear the voice of the muezzin saying takbeer, and remember that Allah is greater than all of this world by which you are distracted. Then go to your prayer-place and pray what Allah has enjoined on you. Do not forget to say that du'aa' that our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us: 'Allahumma a'inni 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni 'ibaadatika (O Allah, help me to remember You, give thanks to You and worship You properly)."

You say that your family is eager to fast six days of Shawwaal, and this is a sign of goodness and righteousness that will help you to offer prayers on time, when you see your mother and siblings getting up at this time. Praise Allah for this; how many complaints come from children whose families smack them to stop them praying and hijab, but Allah has honoured you with a family who can help you to fear Allah.

Keep company with girls who pray and are righteous, and ask them to help you with prayer and to remind you of it and encourage you to do it. That may be the best help for you.

Finally, beware of sins, for they are the basis of all problems. One sin leads to another, and so on, until they accumulate and destroy a man, making it too hard for him to pray and depriving him of its light and blessing. We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Sins generate more sins, and one leads to another, until they overpower a man and he finds it difficult to repent from that. As one of the earlier generation said: One of the punishments of bad deeds is more bad deeds, and one of the rewards of good deeds is more good deeds.

Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi (p. 36).

Secondly:

As for your question about fasting Ramadan and that you are uncertain about not fasting on some days, with no excuse, we say to you: Do not pay any attention to these doubts, if it seems most likely to you that you did this act of worship at the right time with your family. Thinking something most likely is sufficient to have discharged one’s duty, and doubts count for nothing after that.

In Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa’imah (7/143) it says:

Doubts after having finished tawaaf circling the k’abah), saa’i (walking between Safa and Marwah) and prayer should be ignored, because what seems to be the case is that the act of worship is valid.

End quote.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the doubt comes after finishing the act of worship, then no attention should be paid to it, so long as there is no certainty about the matter.

Majmoo’ Fataawa al-Shaykh al-‘Uthaymeen (14/question no. 746).

Moreover, if a fast is not observed with no excuse, it does not have to be made up and no expiation is to be offered, rather one has to repent and seek forgiveness, as has previously been explained in he answer to question no. 50067.

I ask Allah to decree your reward for you and to make you steadfast in adhering to truth and Islam, and to protect you from the accursed shaytaan.

And Allah knows best.