84912 - Mistakes that prevent du’aa’ from being accepted

the question

There are many mistakes that happen with regard to du’aa’ and prevent the du’aa’ from being accepted. What are these mistakes?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The mistakes that may be made in du’aa’ are very many; most of them come under the heading of transgression in du’aa’, such as:

1 – When the du’aa’ includes shirk or association of others with Allaah, such as calling upon someone or something other than Allaah along with Him, whether it is a person, a tree or a grave, because du’aa’ is an act of worship and directing it towards anyone other than Allaah is shirk, and shirk is the worst of sins by which Allaah is disobeyed. In the hadeeth it says: Which sin is worst before Allaah? He said: “To appoint a rival to Allaah, when He has created you.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari and Muslim.

2 –When the du’aa’ includes some innovated means of tawassul (seeking to draw closer to Allaah), such as tawassul by means of the person of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or by his status. Islam is based on following, not on innovating.

3 – Wishing for death because of a calamity that has befallen one. In the hadeeth it is narrated that Khabbaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: “Were it not that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbade us to pray for death, I would have prayed for it.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6350) and Muslim (2681).

In the hadeeth it says: “No one of you should wish for death because of some harm that has befallen him. If he must wish for it, then let him say: ‘O Allaah, keep me alive so long as living is

good for me, and cause me to die when death is good for me.’” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6531) and Muslim (2680).

4 – Praying for the punishment to be hastened. It is better to ask Allaah to keep us safe and sound in this world and in the Hereafter. When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw a Muslim man who was sick and had grown feeble like a chicken. The Messenger of Allaah (S) said to him: “Did you pray for anything or ask for it?” He said: Yes, I used to say: O Allaah, whatever punishment You would give me in the Hereafter, bring it forward in this world. The Messenger of Allaah (S) said: “Subhaan Allaah! You cannot bear it. Why didn’t you say, O Allaah, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and save us from the torment of the Fire?” Then he prayed to Allaah for him, and He healed him. Narrated by Muslim (2688).

5 – Du’aa’ against one’s family and wealth. In the hadeeth it says: “Do not pray against yourselves, do not pray against your children, and do not pray against your wealth, lest that coincide with an hour when Allaah is asked and He answers your prayers.” Narrated by Muslim (3009).

6 – Praying for the severing of family ties, such as praying against someone and asking that there be a rift between him and his wife or some of his relatives.

7 – Praying for a limitation of mercy, such as saying: O Allaah, send rain upon our land only, and so on.

8 – Failing to observe proper etiquette in making du’aa’ to Allaah, such as saying du’aa’ in a manner that is not appropriate. Al-Khattaabi said: It is not proper to say, O Lord of the dogs, or O Lord of the pigs and monkeys, even though all creatures are created by Him and He has complete power over all of them. Sha’n al-Du’aa’ (153).

What is appropriate when calling upon one’s Lord is to observe proper etiquette as much as possible and to avoid anything that is not befitting. The attitude should be one of humility and submission.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to praise his Lord a great deal in his du'aa', to such an extent that it seemed that he could not praise Him enough. He said: "I seek refuge in You from You; I cannot praise You enough."

9 – Relying on someone else in du'aa'. You see some people who do not call upon Allaah themselves on the basis that they are sinners, so they always ask others to make du'aa' for them. Although this is permissible in general, there are some reservations concerning it. Hence one should make a great deal of du'aa' and think positively, and think of the greatness of Allaah's bounty and generosity, no matter how great one's sin, for the mercy of Allaah will encompass him. If Allaah answers the prayers of the mushrikeen when they are in dire straits, then He is more likely to answer the prayers of the believers, despite their shortcomings.

A man came to Maalik ibn Dinar and said: I ask you by Allaah to pray for me, for I am in dire straits. He said: "Then ask of Him (yourself), for He answers the one who is in dire straits." al-Jaami' li Ahkaam il-Qur'aan (13/223).

10 – Despair and lack of certain faith of an answer to the du'aa'. Some people, when they are afflicted with a chronic disease, think that they cannot be cured and they give up du'aa' and fail to turn to Allaah, and perhaps the shaytaan makes them think that there is no need for du'aa'.

This is one of the most serious mistakes, and it is ignorance of Allaah and His power and kindness, for Allaah is Able to do all things, and when He wills a thing He says to it "Be!" and it is.

When Zakariya (peace be upon him) was an old man and his wife was barren, he prayed for offspring: "O my Lord! Grant me from You, a good offspring. You are indeed the All-Hearer of invocation" [Aal 'Imraan 3:38]. And Allaah answered his prayer: "Then the angels called him, while he was standing in prayer in Al-Mihraab (a praying place or a private room), (saying): "Allaah gives you glad tidings of Yahya (John)…" –Aal 'Imraan 3:39]. So do not despair of the help of Allaah or think that the Mercy of Allaah is limited.

11 – Going to extremes in raising the voice, especially in the presence of loudspeakers. The voices of those who are making du'aa' may be heard from afar, and this is a mistake and transgression,

and it is a form of showing-off. It is better to raise the voice only so much as is needed for the worshippers to hear if they are saying Ameen behind you.

12 – Saying, “O Allaah, I am not asking You to change the decree, rather I am asking You to help me in dealing with it.” This is wrong because Allaah has prescribed for us to ask Him to change the decree, because every calamity that befalls a person is divinely decreed.

In a well known du’aa’ it says: “Protect me from the evil of that which You have decreed, for You decree and no decree is passed over You.” al-Bukhaari said: “Chapter on one who seeks refuge with Allaah from calamity and a bad fate, and the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Say: I seek refuge with (Allaah), the Lord of the daybreak” [al-Falaq 113:1]. Then he mentioned the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “Seek refuge with Allaah from hardship, calamity and a bad fate.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (7/215).

13 – Making du’aa’ al-Qunoot lengthy. Praying in a manner that does not befit what is sought, especially at times of calamity, because Qunoot at times of calamity is only prescribed to pray for some people or against others.

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: The one who is praying Qunoot should say at such times the du’aa’ that is suited to that calamity. Al-Fataawa 22/217.

And he said: The Sunnah is to pray Qunoot at the time of calamity and to ask for what is appropriate for those people who are at war against the Muslims. Al-Fataawa, 21/155.

These are some of the mistakes that are made in du’aa’. We ask Allaah to guide us aright and to help us to do and say the right thing.