



## SEEKING COUNSEL

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

### SEEKING ADVICE

#### Objectives >>>

#### Students should:

- Be reminded of the importance of getting advice and seeking counsel
- Understand that they must seek advice from those who know and have more experience
- Understand that they must not give advice on any matter unless they are an expert in that matter
- Know that they must be very wary of advice about any issue given on the internet

'Seeking advice from experts when making major decisions is something very highly encouraged in Islam. In fact, an entire Surah of the *Qur'an* is named 'al-Shūrā' or 'The Counsel'. This shows us that seeking guidance and counselling from experts in a particular area which we need help in, is an important aspect of life.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING FOR ADVICE

Asking for advice from people who know more than us increases our knowledge and allows us to make better and more informed decisions. This is because people who know more can see the consequences of certain decisions more than we can and they can therefore guide us better, so we do not face loss.

In Surat al-Shura, Allah, the Exalted, reminds us of the importance of this act multiple times.

Firstly, he lists the qualities of the believers:

...وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

*"...those who establish prayers, and whose affairs are (discussed in a) council among them..." (42:38)*

In another part of the Qur'an, Allah (SWT) commands the Prophet (saw) to seek the advice of his companions when implementing the laws of Islam. A famous example of this is was in the Battle of Khandaq where the Prophet took advice from his companions and Salmān suggested the strategy of building the trench around the city of Medinah, which the Prophet (saw) approved.

The Prophet (saw) would often even ask his slave for advice. Imam *al-Riḍa* (as) refers to this and says he would also often seek the advice of his companions.

After seeking the opinions of those around us, we must make the final decision ourselves. Once we have reached a decision after counselling, we should go ahead and implement it. The Qur'ān advises the Prophet:

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“...and consult them in the affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah...” (3:159)

We should develop the character of asking for advice when we are faced with problems that we cannot solve ourselves. Often, if we seek advice when the problem is still small, we can avoid the problem becoming much larger and being unsolvable.

## ACCEPTING ADVICE

Another very important point to remember is that we should always be willing to take advice. If someone approaches us and gives us advice on something we are doing wrong or something we can improve, we should accept their advice and at least think about it properly. We should never get upset or annoyed when we are given advice. One of the real qualities of a believer is that they take advice and try to implement it in their lives.

## GIVING ADVICE IS ONLY FOR EXPERTS

It is important to remember that we should not give advice to anyone about anything that we do not have expert knowledge in. For example, if you do not know the rules of football, you cannot tell someone else how to play. Also, if for example you want to buy a car, will you go to a plumber or to a mechanic? Obviously, you would go to a mechanic who has expertise in the area.

If you had questions about spirituality or Islamic laws, you would approach a sheikh, while if you had questions about physical health you would approach a medical

doctor. Therefore, if people give advice without knowing the subject properly, they will cause more harm and will create a lot of difficulty for the person they are giving the so called ‘advice’ to.

## CAUTION! THE INTERNET AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION



Today, it is very easy to type up any problem or question you have on the internet and get a whole variety of answers – many of them are only opinions from ignorant people. Google is *not* a place you want to seek advice from, because it will confuse and mislead you more, if you don't have the help of an expert.

However, it is not completely wrong to do your research on the internet. It is only important that you should be guided by an expert or adult when doing your research so they can direct you sources that are trustworthy and reliable for you to use – you cannot always decide this on your own, so it is important that you ask an adult or teacher to help you in your research.

**Q1. The Holy Qur'ān states that one of the qualities of the believers is to seek the advice of others. In which ṣurah does this occur?**

- a) Ṣurat Āli 'Imrān
- b) Ṣurat al-Qadr
- c) Ṣurat al-Shūrā

**Q2. When someone gives us advice, we should:**

- a) Not worry too much about it
- b) Consider their advice and at least think about it properly
- c) Tell them to mind their own business

### <sup>1</sup> References

- Holy Quran
  - Sura Ash Shura
  - Sura Ale Imran

- Lecture on Social Rules by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei on: Counselling