



GOODNESS TO NEIGHBOURS

بالجار الاحسان

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand who neighbours are and the importance of goodness to neighbours
- Understand that we should be good to neighbours, whether Muslims or not
- Know the ways of being good to our neighbours
- Discuss the issue of 'neighbours of the mosque'

NEIGHBOURS

Our Holy Prophet Muḥammad (saw) has taught us that a neighbour is not just the one who lives next door to us, but includes all those up to forty houses in all directions¹. This pretty much covers our whole neighbourhood. Your neighbour is also someone you are sitting next to, standing next to (like on a bus) etc...

The neighbour holds a special status in Islam. Islam encourages Muslims to treat their neighbours in a gentle way that reflects the true spirit of Islam especially with people of other faiths. It makes no difference whether the neighbours are Muslim or non-Muslim. It is for this reason that we should be good with our neighbours and show them the best of Islam.

How should we show kindness and goodness towards our neighbours?

“Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess”. (4:36)

From the above ayah, we can see that the Holy Qur’an clearly states that we should do good to our family members and near ones and orphans and our neighbours, whether they are our relatives or not.

Here are a few ways we can show kindness towards our neighbours:

- Being good to neighbours is not only restricted to those who share the same building with you. Your roommate is your neighbour; the person sitting behind you or next to you in a bus or at a bus stop is your neighbour; the person enjoying fresh air next to you in a public garden is also a neighbour. You ought to treat all of those people kindly and socialize with them within the scope of Islamic law.
- Introduce yourself and your family to your neighbours when you move into a new place or when new neighbours move in. This will also help to relieve any fears or tensions they may have about Muslims. Also, don't forget to say good-bye when you or they move away.
- Care for them continually, especially at times of need and distress, as "*the neighbour in need is a neighbour*

indeed." If a neighbour is elderly or chronically ill, offer to run errands or shop for him or her.

- In addition to sharing ideas, you can share meals with them by inviting them to dinner on the weekend or accepting their invitation to the same, provided that you let them know about your dietary restrictions as a Muslim.
- If your neighbours show an interest in Islam, invite them to attend Islamic events, and even to accompany you to the mosque to see what it is like. It may be that their hearts become softened to Islam, and if they remain non-Muslim, at least you have succeeded in breaking the barrier.
- Never try to harm your neighbour even if they threaten you or the like. Instead try solving any problems by being calm and talking to them. Things like parking in such a way that is inconvenient to our neighbours or making a lot of noise and thus inconveniencing our neighbours are forms of harming our neighbours and are considered major sins.

"By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer," Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said.

It was asked, "Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?" Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"...One whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil."

Other ways of showing goodness toward neighbours:

- A “Salām” or a “hi”, a slight nod of the head, a brief hello in the hallway...
- How about food? It's been said that food unites. In Africa and many other Muslim countries, by sharing food with our neighbours, we are literally reducing the hunger pangs of many. But it's not just about hunger when sharing with neighbours. Here in western countries, sharing really is about kindness, about uniting people, sharing what's common to our humanity. It's also about building neighbourly relations through small acts of kindness.

Therefore, the most important thing to remember is that we should never harm our neighbours, and that we should be good to them and extend an offer of kindness to them whenever we can.

In addition to this, we should remember that if one of the ways of coming close to Allah (SWT) is to be good to our neighbours:

Prophet Muḥammad (saw) said:

"The best of companions with Allah is the one who is best to his companions and the best of neighbours to Allah is the one who is the best of them to his neighbour."

After knowing above facts, it is good opportunity to remind ourselves the saying of Sayyedah Faṭimah (as):

"Al-Jār Thummā Dār"

"(Beware of the rights of) the neighbours before (your own) home."

NEIGHBOURS OF THE MOSQUE

Why should we pay special attention to the neighbours of our mosques? The answer is simple. A mosque is a place where Muslim brothers and sisters gather to pray, listen to lectures and socialise. The neighbours of the mosque expect some sort of courtesy and respect out of worshippers of any religious institute and especially out of Muslims. There are people out there who are waiting to defame and degrade Muslims, and therefore any small act of goodness we do proves that Islam is a religion of peace and love.

We have to be mindful of not disturbing or inconveniencing our neighbours when we attend the mosque. Things like parking our cars for example. We need to park legally at all times even if it means having to walk ten minutes to get to the mosque. As mentioned earlier, things like parking in front of the neighbour's driveway is a very wrong thing to do.

Imagine if it were your house and you had to go out for an emergency and someone had parked in front of your house and you had no way of going out. How would you feel?

Review Questions

Q1. We are ordered by Allah (SWT) to be good to:

- Our Muslim neighbours
- Our neighbours who are our relatives
- Our neighbours in general

Q2. When we are attending the mosque, we:

- Do not need to care about the neighbours of the mosque, because we are going to worship and this is the most important thing
- Have to take extra care to not annoy or harm the neighbours of the mosque because this reflects on Islam

Q3. When we attend the mosque we should not:

- Park in front of the neighbour's house
- Park in a way that does not disturb anyone
- Walk if we have to, to avoid inconveniencing anyone

ⁱWasaelu-Shi'a 12:125