



Friendships

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

- Be reminded that Allah (SWT) has created us as social creatures
- Be reminded that sometimes being alone can lead us to do bad things
- Discuss the limits of socialisation with non-believers
- Briefly discuss the concepts of al-Tawallī and al-Tabarrī
- Know that there are certain rules related to socialising
- Understand the influence friends can have upon us
- Know that it is important to choose our friends wisely
- Understand that friends should not be chosen for the wrong reasons
- Know the characteristics of the friends we should keep
- Know the type of people we should avoid befriending
- Know that the responsibility to family is more important than that to friends
- Understand that keeping friends is sometimes more difficult than getting friends
- Know that sometimes people change and stop being friends with us for no apparent reason
- Know some strategies for coping with losing friends
- Understand the responsibilities within a friendship

Lesson 1: Socialisation

In Islam socializing with other people, particularly other Muslims, is highly encouraged. We are gregarious by nature, meaning that we naturally socialise with other people and we should embrace this natural inclination to engage with other people. We should not isolate ourselves from the community of people around us, because this can lead to psychological problems.



MAKING FRIENDS IN ISLAM

For this and other reasons, Islam greatly encourages us to make friends and to be very sociable with people. The following narrations show that we should always greet, meet with, gather and visit one another whenever we can. It also encourages making as many friends as we can.



Luqmān, a wise and pious man praised in the Holy Qur’an, while advising his son, his son says to him:

“Oh my Son, take a thousand friends, and even a thousand is few. And do not make even one enemy, and one enemy is too many.”

In other narration, Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

“Make more friends, because for every believer there is a supplication that is answered”

Another reason for socialising and being around people is that sometimes when we are alone, we are more likely to be tempted by our desires and by Satan to do the wrong things. So sometimes, it is good to be around other people, so that we are distracted from any evil thoughts or desires that might come to us.

KEEPING FRIENDS

In Nahjul Balaghah, Imam 'Ali (as) says:

“The real disabled person is the one who cannot make friends. The person who is even more disabled is the one who loses friends he has already made.”

So just as it is important to make friends, it is also important to keep friends.

We should make sure that we do not let pride get in the way of maintaining relationships. We should not lose friends or break up relationships just because we are too proud to apologise or too proud to accept apologies or compromise.

There are certain things we can do to make more friends and avoid losing them:

- **Have a cheerful and bright face** when we meet people – this means smiling at them and asking about them
- **Being polite in our speech** and actions
- **Complimenting people** instead of criticising them
- Being **easy to talk to** and get along with



The following are some of the things we should avoid in order to keep our friends:

- **Being argumentative**
- **Telling offensive jokes**



Imam al-Ṣādiq (as): “If you wish to keep the friendship of your friend pure, then do not make jokes about him, do not argue with him, do not boast to him and do not do any evil to him so that he doesn't do any evil in return to you.”

- **Being over-sensitive**
- **Being picky when it comes to others' mistakes:**

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says: “Counting (the mistakes of a friend) causes separation.”

MODERATION IN SOCIALIZING WITH NON-MUSLIMS

Even though Islam strongly encourages socialisation, it has set rules for socialisation to stop us from socialising with the wrong type of people. These rules are particularly important for Muslims living in the West, who are often living among non-Muslim majorities. When socialising within a non-Muslim society, we should not go to either extreme. We should not completely isolate ourselves from the society around us, but at the same time we should not ignore our Islamic values simply because we live in a non-Islamic country.

We should avoid gatherings where sins are being committed. For example, if there is *ĪrĀm* music, boys and girls mixing or dancing at a birthday party, we should not attend such a party at all.

CHOOSING OUR FRIENDS

One of the basic guidelines Islam has given us in making choices is that of *Tawwallī* and *Tabarrī*.

- *Tawwallī*: means that we should love and be with those who love Allah (SWT), His Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt
- *Tabarrī*: means that we should reject and dislike those who hate Allah (SWT), His Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt

Here, we have to answer a really important question. Does all this mean that I cannot have any non-Muslim friends?

The answer is that we can have non-Muslim friends, but with some conditions:

- We should not take those friends as role models or leaders. We should not let them influence us. In fact, we should influence them.
- Our very closest friends and the people we tell our secrets to (etc...) should not be non-Muslim. This is because they will often give us the wrong advice or help us in the wrong direction, because they are not believers

It is also important not to be friends with Muslim who do not follow their religion and do the wrong thing. For example, if I have a Muslim friend who is a bully, who is rude to his parents and teachers, or who is violent, I should not be that person's friend just because they are a Muslim. Remember that our friends can really influence what kind of person we become.

The Holy Prophet (saw) said: "A person takes the religion of his (close) friend."

We will talk more about friend selection in our next lesson.

Review Questions

Q1. When it comes to non-Muslim friends:

- We are not allowed to have non-Muslim friends
- Non-Muslim friends are just like Muslim friends
- We can have non-Muslim friends as long as we don't let them influence us in a bad way

Q2. To make more friends we should:

- Always be uptight and serious
- Always correct people when they make a mistake
- Be easy-going and easy to get along with

Lesson 2: Selecting Friends

As discussed in the previous lesson, we know that our friends can influence us in many ways. In an authentic ḥadīth, Prophet Muḥammad (saw) said:

"Man is influenced by the faith of his friends. Therefore, be careful of whom you associate with."



In another narration, Prophet Mohammad (saw) said:

"The example of a good companion and a bad companion is like that of the seller of musk, and the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows. So as for the seller of musk then either he will grant you some, or you buy some from him, or at least you enjoy a pleasant smell from him. As for the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows then either he will burn your clothes or you will get an offensive smell from him."

SEEKING GOOD FRIENDS

When choosing our friends we should ask ourselves first:

- Will this friend influence me in a bad way or a good way?
- Will this friend bring me closer to Allah and Paradise or further away from Allah (SWT)?

The Prophet's (saw) comparison of a good companion to a seller of musk and is like a good friend, who has noble manners, piety, knowledge and good manners. These types of people encourage us to do well and share their virtues with us. The Prophet (saw) forbade us to sit with those who do evil, whose manners are bad and who are foolish, because they might influence us to do the same.

Class Activity

Discuss the most important three qualities that should make us not befriend a person.

PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure is when we are influenced to change our behaviour and actions because of the influence of a friend or group of friends.

Sometimes, the behaviour of our friends can bring good peer pressure. For example, if our friends care a lot about their studies, it would encourage us to do the same. If our friends pray on time, it would encourage us to pray on time, because when we are with them, they would stop playing or doing other things, and go to pray. This puts 'pressure' on us to do good things like praying on time.

Other times, the behaviour of our friends can put bad peer pressure on us. For example, if our friends are bullies, it might pressure on us to be bullies too. If our friends don't pray or observe the rules of Islam, it might put pressure on us to do what they do.

Therefore, we should make it easy for ourselves to be good and religious by having a circle of good friends around us. We should also be very careful not to have a circle of bad friends, because that could lead us to do wrong things or commit sins.

Imam al-Sajjād (as) Says: "Beware of the companionship of the sinful, and helping of the unjust."

Therefore, we must choose friends who will bring the best out of us, and associate ourselves with those people who are successful, so that we also may become successful.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD FRIENDS

As Muslims, we have the main responsibility of protecting and improving our faith and religion. Therefore, even when choosing friends the first condition our close friends must satisfy is that they should be believers (Muslims). In addition to this we must seek friends who are

- Well mannered
- Polite to other people especially elders
- Kind and obedient to their parents
- Honest to everyone




We also have to ensure that we make and keep friends only from the same gender and should avoid becoming close friends with people of the opposite gender.

WHO TO AVOID

Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (as) has narrated from his father Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (as) who said that his father Imam al-Sajjād (as) advised him:

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- "My son! Beware of five (groups) and do not seek companionship (friendship) with them, do not speak with them, and do not make friends with them on (the) way: 
- "Beware of and do not associate with the one who tells lies. He is as a mirage which makes near for you what is far, and makes far to you what is near."
- "Beware of and do not associate with an immoral person, because he will sell you at the price of a morsel of food or less than that."
- "Beware of and do not associate with a miser (stingy person) because he will deprive you of his wealth when you are seriously in need of it."
- "Beware of and do not associate with a fool, because he wants to be of help to you but (instead) he harms you."
- "Beware of and do not associate with the one who has bad relations with his family, because I found him (such a person) cursed in the Book Allah,
- Almighty and Glorious, in three places."

Class Activity

Discuss with your teacher why each of the above characteristics are not good in a friend! Why should we avoid people with these characteristic?

Review Questions

Q1. We should choose friends who:

- Make us look cool even if we do bad things
- Take us away from being good Muslims
- Make us be the best we can

Q2. Our close friends should be:

- A good and believing person
- Rude and arrogant
- Cool

Q3. When we know or see a friend encouraging us to do something wrong, we should

- Stop being his friend immediately
- Guide him to avoid doing the bad thing

- c. Listen to him, because he is a friend

Lesson 3: Strong friendships

In this lesson we will discuss some more complicated issues related to friends and friendships. The points we discuss today should help us to have longer and stronger friendships.

FRIENDS VS. FAMILY

However close we may be with our friends, it is important to know that our responsibilities to our parents and family come first before our friends.



Obedying and being loving towards our parents is the most important obligation God has placed on us as children.

Imam 'Ali (as) says:

“Goodness towards (one’s) parents is the greatest obligatory act.”ⁱ

Therefore, when it comes to choosing between going out with friends and helping out at home, we have to respect our parents and remain home to help them out, instead of going out with our friends.

Similarly, when our friends are pressuring us to do something and our parents are telling we should not do this thing, we should listen to our parents and take their advice.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“One, who follows the orders of Allah with regards to obeying parents, shall have two doors of Paradise opened up for him. And if there happens to be only one parent, one door of Paradise shall open up for him.”ⁱⁱ

DEALING WITH LOSING FRIENDS

Sometimes it is possible that we may lose a friend for no obvious reason or sometimes there may be a reason.

As we grow up and our values, beliefs and interests change, so do our friends. Most of us have and make friends with others because they share the same interests that we do – if they don’t we would not make friends with them.

As Muslims we may sometimes lose friends because we stand up for what is right and do not agree with some of the things our friends do – for example if you find that your close friend has taken to smoking – and after advising him he still does not listen, then your friendship may break due to this bad habit of his. However, in this case you should not feel sad and upset, because you have actually avoided being a friend to someone who does not have good habits.



When such a thing happens we must always remember Allah (SWT) and make sure that we try our best not to go astray from the right path because of our friends. Sometimes Allah (SWT) tests us with such tests to see who we are more faithful to – Islam or our friends?

Some of the things we can do to help ourselves when we lose a friend or a friend leaves us is:

- Don’t give up in the hope of finding a better friend
- Participate more in the right kind of activities where we can meet good people that can be your friends
- Asking to Allah (SWT) to grant us good friends and to help us improve ourselves more.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FRIENDS

A friendship is a close relationship where people share interests, information and advice. This can involve personal information like basic secrets that are not shared with other people. Friends are also a good source of advice and help in difficult situations and therefore they are more aware of each other’s problems or weaknesses.



It is therefore very important to know your responsibilities as a good friend. Friends must:

- Protect each other – especially in cases where someone insults our friend or speaks ill behind their back.
- Friends also have the responsibility of protecting each other from committing sins or doing wrong things.
- Be generous to each other and always willing to help each other whenever one friend is in difficulty or need
- Not imitate everything from each other unless if it is a good action. It is important to keep our own individuality and independence
- Must not share all their secrets with each other – this is because sometimes when friendships break one person can take revenge on or bully another if they know too much about the other person.
- ⁱⁱⁱRegularly pray for each other's happiness and success in both this world and the Hereafter – it is one of the best gifts that can be shared among friends.

Review Questions

Q1. If your parents ask you to mow the lawn and your friends have planned a party that afternoon – you should?

- a. Forget about listening to your parents and make sure you attend the party
- b. Tell your friends you can't come because your parents need some help
- c. Mow the lawn tomorrow

Q2. If your friend asks you for some help in a difficult time – what will you do?

- a. Abandon him to find his own help
- b. Try as hard as possible to help him
- c. Break your friendship with him because he needs something from you

Q3. Your friend invites you to a party where there will be ḥarām music. You should

- a. Tell him not to go and plan to do something else
- b. Go with him but don't do the ḥarām that is going on
- c. Break your friendship with him if he has become a bad person

ⁱⁱⁱ References

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ⁱ *Mizanul Hikmah, Volume 10, Page 709* ⁱⁱ *Kanzul `Ummal, Volume 16, Page 67*