



COMMUNITY SERVICE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the meaning of community service
- Understand the importance of meeting the needs of the believers
- Understand people's needs from us are God's blessings to us
- Understand that community service is for the sake of Allah (SWT) only
- Understand community service will make us happier
- Discuss forms of community service that can be done and we can be a part of

Helping Fellow Muslims

Community service is: providing a helping hand and rendering services to the community which can include helping just one person to helping all of humanity. There are many ways in which we can help others in our community. Some basic examples are:

- Joining and donating fundraising programs for the poor and needy
- Helping to maintain our local mosque or community centre
- Giving help to our Muslim friends when they ask for help in any legitimate thing they need, such as:
 - Helping them with homework
 - Giving them a lift in our parents' car to a sports game
 - Sharing lunch with them if they can't afford it that day

The Prophet (saw) said:

“Any person in my community who acts kindly towards his brother in faith, Allah will grant him the service of the servants of Paradise.”

MEETING THE NEEDS OF BELIEVERS

We must understand that not everyone has the same status in terms of power, wealth, health etc... in the community. Thus many require aid and help in many aspects. The Muslim community is like one body and if one part is hurt, the other parts have to show concern. Imam Ḥasan (as) has said:

“Treat others similar to the way like for them to treat you.”

This is a very important point because we all would like to have nice things, good health and enjoy great amount of respect within a community. Thus if we treat our fellow brothers and sisters the way we would like to be treated, our communities would prosper.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“For, never would Your Lord destroy a community for wrong so long as its people behave righteously [towards one another]” (11:17)

This righteous behaviour can have several meanings but a clear meaning would be the fact that the believers respect the rights of each other and take care of each other in all aspects. An example is that an engineer will help with building a centre, while a banker with the expenses and financial aspects, builders with labour, lawyers for the council's approval and so on.

A BLESSING FROM ALLAH (SWT)

By having to meet the needs of believers, it is a blessing from Allah because we are rewarded for every form of assistance we provide to the believers.

The Prophet (saw) said:

‘Verily Allah gives succour to this community only as a result of [the presence of] the weak among them, their supplication, their prayer and their sincerity.’

Succour means help and assistance. Therefore, blessings are showered upon a community as a result of the weak who thus require assistance from those who have the ability to help and assist thus getting blessed by Allah (SWT).

THE EXAMPLE OF AN IMAM

In one instance, Imam al-Ḥasan (as) was performing ṭawāf around the Holy Ka'bah. At this time, a man came and asked the Imam (as) for help. He was in debt and was in a desperate situation, and was going to be placed in jail. He wanted the Imam (as) to loan him some money. The Imam (as) did not have any money to give him. The man then asked if the Imam (as) would intercede for him with his debtors so that they would allow him more time to repay his debt. The Imam (as) agreed to this. One of the companions of the Imam (as) saw this. He showed his surprise at this, saying to the

Imam that jurisprudentially one is not allowed to stop their ṭawāf and leave before finishing it. However, the Imam replied that this social responsibility took priority.

“Whoever helps his Muslim brother in a need that he has, it is as if he worshipped Allah for nine thousand years, in which he stood on his feet during the night and fasted during the day”.

In another instance, Imam al-Ḥasan (as) was praying a recommended prayer, when he saw an old man struggling to get up because he could not reach his walking stick which had fallen far away from him. The Imam (as), while he was praying, walked over to the man, gave him his walking stick, then resumed his prayer.

These two examples show that in Islam helping people and meeting their needs is extremely important, and can take precedence over ritual acts of worship.

Review Questions

Q1. How can we help a fellow Muslim?

- Telling them to find help from a non-Muslim
- Showing off to them that you are rich and wealthy and they are not
- Offering them as much help as possible based on your capacity

Q2. Which of the following person will receive the most reward based on good intentions?

- A person who only helps out with some money
- A person who helps out with money and also assists in a program at a centre
- A person who helps out by giving money, helps out at the centre and encourages others to do so as well

Benefits of Community Service

In the last lesson, we learnt how important it is help our fellow brothers and sisters and people in general in whatever ways possible.

HELPING TO THE SAKE OF ALLAH (SWT)

We should help others with intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT). This is because if there was any other intention, it would lead to showing off or pride thus nullifying our rewards.

Giving charity, whether it is with our money, time or effort, has many rewards. The Holy Qur'an states:

“Those who spend their possessions [for the sake of God] by night and by day, secretly and openly, shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.”

(2:74)

If we want to gain these rewards, we have to make sure to follow these rules:

- make our intention solely for Allah (SWT)
- try to give in private more than in public
- avoid showing off, boasting or bragging

It is also important that we do not make the person we are helping feel bad. We should not hold it over them that we have helped them, and constantly remind them of it. Instead, we should make it seem like what we did was something very small or nothing, so that they do not feel shy or bad.

“Meeting the needs of believers is not complete except by meeting three principles: belittling the help so that it becomes great, keeping it secret so that it may become apparent, doing it quickly...”

If we want to gain even more reward, we should offer to help our friends before they even come to ask us. Imam 'Ali (as) said:

“Let none of you compel his brother to ask, if you already know about his need.”

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

The most important benefit of doing good to others and meeting their needs are the rewards God will give us in the Hereafter. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (SWT) makes a promise to help those who helped others in this world:

“Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan, which He will amply repay, with manifold increase? For, God takes away, and He gives abundantly; and it is unto Him that you shall be brought back.” (2:245)

In addition, there are other benefits to community service. It makes us better people in general. The Holy Prophet (saw) has said:

“The best of people are those that are most beneficial to other people.”

There are numerous other benefits of community service:

1. The members of the community form stronger bonds and thus create a stronger community.
2. It creates happiness and joy within us as discovered by many scientists. When we do good to others, we feel good within ourselves. This is in fact one of the cures to make us feel happier when we feel down or depressed.
3. It allows people to discover talents that they thought they never had like those who decided to help in organizing activities realising their potential as event organizers.
4. Helping others means Allah (SWT) will help us especially when we are in need.

ALLAH (SWT) WILL LOOK AFTER US

Allah (SWT) will look after us if we are always helping¹ out others in the form of money or services.

Imam al-Sajjād (as) says:

“The one who meets the need of a believer has begun by meeting the need of God and because of it God will meet one hundred of his needs. One of these needs is paradise. The one who relieves the sorrow of someone else, God will relieve the sorrow of the Hereafter from him. If one visits an ill person, the angels will surround him and pray for him until he leaves. The angels say: ‘may Paradise be for you purely’. By Allah, meeting the need of a believer is dearer to Allah than fasting two consecutive months while performing I'tikāf in Masjidul Haram”

Review Questions

Q1. We should help for the sake of Allah (SWT)

because:

- a. Because He will reward us
- b. Because He will help us overcome difficulties
- c. Both of the above

Q2. When we help others, we should:

- a. Make a big deal out of it
- b. Make it very public
- c. Make it seem small and keep it private

¹REFERENCES

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