



AVOIDING ARGUMENTS

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Avoiding Arguments

DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS

One of the beautiful things about humans is that Allah (SWT) has created us each with our own way of thinking and no two people are alike. This is a major blessing in terms of being able to independently use our intellect and wisdom to understand our society and Creator, and distinguishes us from animals. However, a problem that often unnecessarily results from our differing opinions, views, and knowledge is argument and conflict.



Arguments can easily be avoided if we learn to communicate correctly with one another and respect and tolerate one another. As Muslims, we must maintain a high level of moral discipline and be able to politely yet firmly present our beliefs without becoming angry, raising our voice, or being dragged into arguments. We must learn how to not allow others to enrage us or argue with us for hours and hours without any benefit to either party.

We must learn to be able to judge whether the person we are conversing with is truly open to understanding and accepting our viewpoint or if they simply want to impose their viewpoints on us, and move away as soon as we realise that it is becoming an unproductive argument. Allah (SWT) teaches us that when we meet such people, instead of arguing and quarrelling we have

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know that different people have different opinions about things and as a Muslim we have to respect and tolerate other's opinions as long as they are not destructive to Islam.
- Know that in order to defend Islam, arguments and conflict do not help (with examples)
- Know the ills of arguing and the psychology of arguing
- Understand that arguing can have many destructive effects on the person, family and the society
- Know some ways of avoiding arguments
- Understand that Allah does not like those who argue and fight between themselves.

to agree to disagree, and respect and tolerate their opinions as long as they are not destructive to Islam.

What this means is that if someone, for example, is of the opinion that all Muslims must be removed from a particular land we must stand against them as they are destructive to Islam and cannot simply respect and tolerate them. Other than such exceptions, we must try to coexist with mutual respect and tolerance, exemplified by the Ayah:

"To you be your religion, and to me my religion" (109:6)

Sometimes we feel that in order to defend Islam we must argue or have conflict with someone. For example, a classmate may be saying rude things about the Holy Prophet (saw) and we might think that it is our duty to defend him by physically or verbally attacking the person.



Yes, it is our duty to defend the Holy Prophet but it is also our duty to maintain our morals and swallow our anger and address the issue in a civilised manner. This is exemplified by the kindness demonstrated by the Holy Prophet and our Imams when people mocked or verbally abused them.

Attacking the person either physically or verbally would only make such situations worse and the best thing to do is to swallow our anger, calm down, and politely talk with the person – perhaps some time after in private. The best way to deal with each situation may vary based on the circumstances but we must keep in mind these principles and act in accordance with our wisdom and patience.

PSYCHOLOGY OF ARGUING

There are many reasons why people argue:

- 1- Sometimes we feel we know the truth and need to share it with others and when others do not

agree and are not prepared to listen, an argument erupts. Being able to avoid quarrelling even when we are right is amongst the traits of the righteous.

- 2- Sometimes we think that we would be perceived as weak if we admit to being wrong and might argue or raise our voice unnecessarily due to our pride even when we know that we are wrong. As Muslims, we are encouraged to submit to the truth however painful it may be and to take responsibility for our mistakes.
- 3- Sometimes we argue and rebel when we want to be heard, when we feel no one is listening to us and we feel frustrated. This is as a result of anger. This kind of anger is also prohibited in Islam. Imam 'Ali (a) said:

"Protect yourself from anger for its beginning is insanity and its end is remorse."ⁱⁱ

- 4- Sometimes we get defensive and argue when we are criticized about something we have done. This is because we have pride in our hearts and do not have the capacity to take criticism well. Imam al-Şādiq (as) encourages to be open to constructive criticism:

"Amongst my brothers my favourite is one who informs me of my failings and defects"ⁱⁱ.

- 5- Sometimes we are completely ignorant of an issue and yet we argue. This is the most disliked form of argument and is a symptom of a disease of the soul. Imam al-Şādiq (as) says:

"Avoid arguing, for it leads to disease of the heart".

- 6- Sometimes we are bored and have nothing to talk about so we start arguments on issues that have no relevance in this world or the next (blue is better than white!?). This Idle talk is also highly discouraged in Islam.



- 7- Sometimes we argue due to wanting to demonstrate our superiority over another

person and feeding into our pride. This can be over issues such as nationality, tribe, family, and sports team. As Muslims we must also avoid such arguments.

THE EFFECTS OF BEING ARGUMENTATIVE

Entering arguments unnecessarily has many destructive effects on the person, the family and society in general:

- It leads to animosity between the people arguing and therefore a lack of trust and co-operation especially if arguments happen between friends and family. It can destroy relationships leading to divorce, family feuds and sometimes often lead to major sins such as backbiting, lying etc...
- It leads to the faults of people being exposed and therefore the erosion of trust between people.
- It can waste a lot of time and often perpetuates ignorance and malice.
- It brings about enmity: even though we may be trying to convince a person of the truth, if we are very argumentative, we may end up driving people away from us.
- It brings anger, frustration, headaches, and hatred between the people involved.

PREVENTING QUARRELS



As Muslims we are encouraged to stop arguments to the extent that we can even lie to bring believers closer.

“ And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah’s command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably (49:9)

Here, Allah (SWT) commands that we have to promote peace between believers this, especially between biological brothers and sisters.

HOW CAN WE STOP BEING ARGUMENTATIVE?

There are several ways in which we can stop being argumentative:

- Agreeing to disagree - This is the most effective means and is encouraged in Islam as we have discussed.
- Differentiating between a discussion and an argument. A discussion is when both parties present their points politely and respectfully and intend to gain knowledge or increase understanding, rather than simply demonstrate that they are right in order to feed their pride and feel better about themselves. Well-mannered and constructive discussions are very much encouraged in Islam, provided that we are knowledgeable on the issue.
- Avoiding arguments and discussions where one has little or no knowledge on the subject.
- Accepting criticism and not considering it a personal attack.
- Avoiding talking back in anger/frustration and instead discussing disagreements once we have calmed down later on. Arguments are often more lethal when in anger and one should avoid and be very passive to an angry person, and not incite them further with aggressive comments in return.
- Trying to look at issues from the viewpoints of others and see their reasoning behind their actions. As Muslims, we are taught to make excuses for others.
- Avoid places of idle talk and ignorance especially online chat rooms and arguments on social media (Facebook etc...) and similarly avoid people who like to argue.

ALLAH DISLIKES THOSE WHO QUARREL

"The believers are but a single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two contending

brothers, and observe your duty to God, that you may receive mercy." (49:10)

It is clear from this āyah that Allah (SWT) loves those who act righteously and create peace and reconciliation, and dislikes those who argue and quarrel. Therefore, as Muslims we must make sure we maintain a high level of manners and practice patience when disputes arise. ⁱⁱⁱ

Review Questions

1. Arguing a lot:

- a. Improves our debating skills
- b. Improves our reputation
- c. Leads to disease of the heart

2. If someone is not willing to listen to the truth, we are encouraged to:

- a. Get angry at them and never give up until they start listening
- b. Speak to them in a calm and mannered way, and leave them be if they do not want to accept
- c. Get our friends to join in and try to convince them as well. They will be scared of big numbers

3. We can stop being argumentative by:

- a. Agreeing to disagree, knowing the difference between a discussion and an argument, and accepting criticism.
- b. Making our voice louder and louder
- c. Discussing what we have little or no knowledge of.

ⁱ Al-Amidi, *Gharar ul-Hikam wa darar ulKalim*, hadith # 2635

ⁱⁱ Bihar, Vol 74, Page 282

ⁱⁱⁱ Social Rules in Islam, 'Avoiding Arguments' – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei