

INCREASING FAITH (PART 1 OF 2): WHY FAITH IS NOT ALWAYS AT A STEADY LEVEL

Rating: 5.0

Description: An introduction to increasing one's level of faith (Imaan). Here we begin by examining the meaning of the word faith and discover that faith increases and decreases primarily due to the nature of the human being and the different circumstances encountered in our everyday lives.

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Objectives

- To discover what the word faith means, particularly in Islam.
- To understand how and why a person's level of faith is not stable, but increases and decreases according to a number of factors.

Arabic Terms

- Imaan* - faith, belief or conviction.
- Ramadan* - The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is the month in which the obligatory fasting has been prescribed.
- Shaytan* - sometimes spelled *Shaitan* or *Shaytaan*. It is the word used in Islam and the Arabic language to denote the devil or Satan, the personification of evil.
- Shahadah* - Testimony of Faith.
- Salah* - the Arabic word to denote a direct connection between the believer and Allah. More specifically, in Islam it refers to the formal five daily prayers and is the most important form of worship.
- Sawm* - Fasting
- Hajj* - A pilgrimage to Mecca where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals. The *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able.
- Zakah* - obligatory charity.

What is faith?

In its definition of the word faith the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary includes the following: Belief and trust in and loyalty to God, belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion, and something that is believed especially with strong conviction.



Faith in Islam means to consider, without doubt, something to be true. It can only be bestowed upon a person by Allah and includes the belief and acknowledgement of Allah as the One and Only God. A person with faith understands and accepts his or her position as Allah's slave and acknowledges Allah's right to be obeyed and thanked. Faith also involves knowing that Allah's promises to His faithful slave are true and will come to pass.

Faith or *Imaan* is something to be spoken in words, to be believed in within the heart, and to be put into action.

Prophet Muhammad said that faith had seventy-odd branches, the greatest of which is to say 'There is no (true) god but Allah' and the lowest of which is to remove an obstacle from the road."^[1]

Faith is expressed with the words "*La ilaha illa Allah wa Mohammad rasulullah*", meaning: There is no true deity but Allah and Mohammad is His messenger. Faith is put into action by following the five pillars of Islam and resides in the heart with belief in the six pillars of faith.

The Five pillars of Islam

- *Shahadah*: sincerely reciting the Testimony of Faith.
- *Salah*: performing the prayer in the proper way five times each day.
- *Zakah*: paying a fixed percentage in alms or charity to benefit the poor and the needy.
- *Sawm*: fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- *Hajj*: A pilgrimage to Mecca (situated in present day Saudi Arabia) where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals.

The Six Pillars of Faith

- Belief in Allah.
- Belief in the angels.

- Belief in the revealed books.
- Belief in the Messengers and Prophets of Allah.
- Belief in the Last Day.
- Belief in the predestination or divine decree.

Faith (*Imaan*) Increases and Decreases

Prophet Muhammad said, "... The likeness of the heart is that of a feather at the root of a tree, being turned over and over by the wind."^[2]

It is faith, complete reliance on Allah, that makes us feel safe, secure and close to Allah - faith however is not stable, it increases and decreases. Faith often fluctuates according to life's circumstances, but whatever the reason for the fluctuations faith increases with obedience to Allah and decreases with disobedience. As believers we should try to learn what things, such as deficiencies in our prayer or whispers from *Shaytan*, decrease our faith. Next we must take appropriate steps to avoid those things or situations, and at the same time try to increase our faith by doing the deeds that Allah loves. We all have moments when we feel the need or necessity of performing acts of worship and this is natural and it will happen many times throughout our lives. Thus securing our faith is one of the most important things a believer can do. The starting point to increasing the level of faith in one's heart is to recognise there is a problem.

Things that reduce our level of faith (*Imaan*)

- Neglecting acts of worship.
- Committing sins. Especially small sins committed continuously.
- Ignorance of the Names and Attributes of Allah.
- Failing to ponder on the signs of Allah's greatness. Particularly those that we experience every day such as the sun, moon and the stars, or the ability to breathe or procreate.
- Neglecting to be grateful to Allah for even the most menial of abilities or possessions.
- Failing to seek adequate knowledge.
- Failing to perform good deeds, even the smallest things such as smiling.
- Wasting time by doing things that have no use in either this world or the next.

·Forgetting that our ultimate purpose is to worship Allah.

·Being excessive with the necessities of life. For example, eating too much, sleeping away the day, staying up late for no purpose, talking for no good reason and being preoccupied with wealth.

At times many people feel that they are trying as hard as possible and cannot understand why their faith seems to be decreasing. At this point it is important to remember that humankind's worst enemy, *Shaytan*, loves causing people to forget what is in their best interest. *Shaytan* encourages negligence and laziness, both traits that cause a decrease in faith.

Fluctuating levels of faith are normal. Everyone experiences them. At such times it is important to do all the obligatory acts of worship thus never leaving the path of Allah completely. For where there is the tiniest piece of faith, hope abides.

In the following lesson we will discover that there are a myriad of ways in which to increase faith.

Footnotes:

[1]

Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim

[2] *Imam Ahmad*

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