

Ilm Essentials

Purification of the Heart

Lesson 1

Understanding the Heart

Narrations Regarding the Heart

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- “A day in which neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit (to anyone), except one who comes to Allah with a pure heart” (Quran 26:88-89)
- “Is one who was dead and then We revived and made for him a light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness from which he cannot exit?” (Quran 6:122)
- “Surely in the breasts of man is a piece of flesh, if it is sound, the entire body is sound. And if it is corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. Take note, it is nothing except the heart” (Bukhāri)

Universal Understanding of the Heart

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- Cultures throughout time have language which indicates to the spiritual side of the heart
- In Chinese medicine the heart is considered to house the spirit
- In America we refer to people as
 - ▣ “Hard-hearted” or “heart-broken”
 - ▣ “Wears his heart on his sleeve”
 - ▣ “It warmed/touched my heart”
 - ▣ “He stole my heart” or “my heart skipped a beat”

Understanding the Physical Heart

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- Physical heart is the center of the body
 - ▣ A person cannot live without it
- If the heart dies
 - ▣ Rest of the body dies with it
- Engine that allows all of the other parts to run
 - ▣ Those other parts are also important
 - But secondary relative to the heart
- If someone has a clogged artery, but his lungs, liver and spleen are fine, what happens

Understanding the Spiritual Heart

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- Similarly the spiritual heart (qalb) is the center of the soul
 - ▣ Without it, the soul is not complete
- If the qalb dies
 - ▣ The soul dies along with it
- “Is one who was dead and then We revived and made for him a light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness from which he cannot exit?” (Quran 6:122)
 - ▣ One who was dead refers to a dead heart
- The spiritual heart runs everything else
 - ▣ And while other aspects are important, for example our salāh, fasting, etc.
 - They become worthless without a sound heart

Heart Defines Who We Are

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- The Quran describes 3 types of people
 - ▣ Believer, disbeliever and hypocrite
- The believer is one whose heart is alive
 - ▣ With īmān
- The disbeliever is one whose heart is dead
- The hypocrite is one whose heart is diseased

The Power of the Heart

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- ❑ This is the power of the heart
 - ▣ That it literally defines who a person is in the sight of Allah
- ❑ Can understand the power of the heart by looking at the power of the physical heart
 - ▣ Which houses the spiritual heart
- ❑ Beats 100,000 times a day
 - ▣ Works 24/7, never taking a break
 - ▣ Pumps 100 gallons of blood per hour
 - ▣ Vascular system is more than 60,000 miles long
 - More than twice the circumference of the Earth
- ❑ While the brain controls most of the functions of the body
 - ▣ The actual beating of the heart is independent
 - Since it is controlled by Allah directly

The Role of the Heart

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- Generally understood that the brain is the center of consciousness
 - ▣ Islām views the heart as being the organ of perception and intelligence
 - “Already have We urged to Hell many of the jinn and man, they have hearts with which they do not understand” (Quran 7:179)
 - “...place over their hearts a covering that they may not understand it and in their ears acute deafness” (Quran 6:25)

The Role of the Heart

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- Heart is what feels/perceives good and bad
 - ▣ Justice and injustice
 - ▣ Sin and righteous action
 - ▣ “Sin is what causes uneasiness in your heart” (Muslim)
 - ▣ “The likeness of one who remembers his Lord compared to one who does not is the likeness of a living person compared to a dead one” (Bukhāri and Muslim)
- The heart is what perceives the attributes and manifestations of Allah in the world around us

A Disconnected Heart

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- As the heart becomes disconnected from the body through our sins
 - ▣ The key organ of perception is taken out of the picture
- Which is why we get happy and sad with changes in our dunyā
 - ▣ But we don't experience the same with our āakhirah and spiritual states
- We become like a child, who has a brain, but its capacity is diminished
 - ▣ So that no matter how much it wants to do adult things, no matter how strong that desire
 - It simply doesn't have the ability
 - ▣ Just like our desire to feel the prayer, etc.

A Disconnected Heart

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- So despite the salāh and other good deeds having an effect
 - ▣ We don't have the ability to perceive them anymore
- The most destructive result of this is that we turn our focus away from the ākhirah, which is eternal and true
 - ▣ Toward the dunyā, which is ephemeral and fleeting

Understanding the System

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- Three great blessings
 - ▣ Qalb, aql and nafs
- And when they function as a complete system
 - ▣ That blessing is intensified and perfected
- A healthy system
 - ▣ Heart sends out the messages
 - ▣ Mind processes those messages
 - ▣ Nafs provides the impetus to act
- When the heart is taken out of the picture
 - ▣ Either the nafs or mind takes over

Understanding the System

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- If the nafs is put in charge
 - ▣ Its like having the car fueled and ready
 - ▣ GPS programmed
 - ▣ Warm cup of coffee
 - But then a 3-year old gets behind the wheel

Balanced State

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- When something is agitated
 - ▣ Need to find that thing which calms it down
- Get too close to the nest of an animal, its mother growls
 - ▣ When a baby is hungry, it cries and cries until it is given what it needs
 - No matter how much you rock or play with it or soothe it
 - It needs milk to reach that balanced state, to be at rest
- The heart also has a balanced state, which is serenity
 - ▣ Achieved through the remembrance of Allah
 - “Most surely, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find calm” (Quran 13:28)
- Without remembrance, the heart becomes agitated and screams out
 - ▣ But most people ignore those screams or attempt to muffle them
 - No less severe than leaving a crying baby to die of starvation

Balanced State

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- “Verily actions are by their intentions” (Bukhāri)
 - ▣ Everything we do is judged, and rewarded, based on our intentions
 - And intentions are seeded in the heart
- So if the heart is sick, intentions suffer
 - ▣ If intentions suffer, so do our actions
 - If our actions suffer, so will our outcome on that Final Day

Importance of a Pure Heart

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- We learned in fiqh that a certain amount of filth can be excused
 - ▣ Entire rules can be relaxed and forgone in extreme situations
 - But this is not the case with the heart
- Either it is 100% pure and enters Paradise
 - ▣ Or less than 100% and needs to be purified
 - This is why even an iota of arrogance is not tolerated
- Question is do we want the purification to happen now, or later, through the Fire

Questions and Discussion

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