

ALI 340: Elements of Effective Communication

Session Six

Imam Zaynul Abidin (a) when asked about speaking or silence, which was better, he said: For each of these two there are harms and when they are both safe from harm speaking is better than being quiet. They asked him ‘How is this so, O son of the Prophet?’ He said, ‘ Because;

- Almighty Allah did not send Prophets and successors to remain quiet, rather He sent them with speech
- Heaven is not earned by silence
- Quietness is not obligated for the vicegerency of Allah
- Protection from Hell is not sought through silence.

This is all possible through speech.’

Agenda

- The Holy Quran
- Active Listening
- Process of Active Listening
- Islamic recommendations on listening
- Examples from the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ
وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And when the Quran is recited
then listen to it and remain silent
that mercy may be shown to you

Sura A'raaf, 7:204

Hadith from the Holy Prophet (s) about listening to the Quran

- 1) Truly, one who yearns for Allah let him listen to the speech of Allah.
- 2) Whoever listens to one verse of the Quran it is better for him than a *Thabir* of gold, and *Thabir* is the name of a huge mountain in Yemen.
- 3) Whoever listens to a verse of the Book of Allah, a good deed is written for him that multiplies.

From: Mizanul Hikmah, H#s 16264, 16265, 16267

Active Listening

Hearing refers to the sounds that enter the ears. Listening is to focus on the sounds and gain meaning from them.

Effective listening is done with the ears of the heart.

‘The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.’
(Rachel Naomi Remen)

Process of active listening

Active listening means to:

- 1) Stop all self talk
- 2) Focus on the present
- 3) Be engaged in what the person is saying
- 4) Be attentive to non verbal cues
- 5) Be curious about the other person
- 6) Show interest through non verbal cues
- 7) Ask appropriate questions without interrupting

Islamic Recommendations on Listening

With a speaker

مَنْ تَكَلَّمَ، أَنْصَتُوا لَهُ حَتَّى يَفْرَغَ

Be silent for one who speaks until he is done.
(Source: Allamah Tabatabai, Sunan an Nabi)

From Ibrahim bin Abbas about Imam ar-Ridha (a)

مَا رَأَيْتُ قَطَعَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ كَلَامَهُ حَتَّى يَفْرَغَ مِنْهُ

I never saw him interrupt someone's talk, until he was done with it. (Source: Biharul Anwar, Vol.49, pg 90)

With the teacher

The right of the one who trains you through knowledge is . . . listening well to him and inclining towards him.

Imam Zaynul Abidin (a), Risalatul Huqooq, Right no.16

When you sit with a scholar, be more eager to hear him than to talk yourself. Learn how to listen well just as you learn how to speak well, and do not interrupt his speech.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a), Al-Hayat, v.2, p.273

With the Counselor (Advisor)

And the right of your counselor is that you should treat him gently, then you should be whole-heartedly attentive to him, and open your ears for him so that you understand his counsel.

And then study it deeply. And if what he presents to you is right, you should praise God for it, and accept it from him and acknowledge his favor.

But if what he presents to you does not agree with you, you should be kind to him and make no accusations against him

Imam Zaynul Abidin (a), Risalatul Huqooq, Right no.42

With the grief stricken

مِنَ السُّؤْدَدِ الصَّبْرُ لِأَسْتِمَاعِ شَكْوَى الْمَلْهُوفِ

From the nobility of patience is to listen to the complaints of the grief stricken.

Imam Ali (a), Ghurar al-Hikam, H#9443

Examples from the Holy Quran

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ ۗ
قُلْ أُذُنٌ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

Among them are those who torment the Prophet and say ‘He is an ear.’ Say ‘An ear that is good for you. He has faith in Allah and trusts the faithful and is a mercy for those of you who have faith.’

Sura Tawbah, 9:61

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ
بِخَوِيٍّ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّا تَبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا

We know best what they listen for
when they listen to you
and when they hold secret talks
when the wrong doers say,
you are only following a bewitched man.

Sura al-Israa, 17:47

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ ۗ
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

So give good news to My servants
who listen to the word and follow the best of it
These are the ones whom Allah has guided
And these are the people of understanding.

Sura az-Zumar, 39:17-18