

## Relieving Loneliness through Closeness to Allah

*And those Foremost (in Faith) will be Foremost (in the Hereafter)*

*These will be those Nearest to Allah. In Gardens of Bliss.*

Surah al-Waqeah, 56:10-12

Human beings often lead lives that are lonely and unfulfilled. Although surrounded by family and friends, and many of the trappings of worldly success, they still suffer from feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is widespread in our modern, urban society. According to Ralph Keyes, in his book *We the Lonely People*, many people today have values that make developing a sense of community almost impossible. Most of society is thus headed for a crisis of loneliness.

To relieve this loneliness, Islam tells its followers to seek nearness to Allah, to build and strengthen a relationship that is utterly reliable and available at all times. Imam Ali (a) says: *O Allah You are the most intimate companion of Your friends . . . if loneliness overtakes them Your remembrance delights them, and when calamities befall them they seek refuge in Your nearness.*

Closeness to Allah is the ultimate pleasure of the soul. It provides fulfillment and happiness which cannot be got elsewhere. Every other relationship, however good and loving, is still vulnerable and not completely reliable. According to Imam as-Sadiq (a) a man's faith can provide him fulfilling company even when he is completely alone. He says: *There is no believer except that Allah has made from his faith a source of delight he can seek solace in, so that even if he were on the summit of a mountain he would not be lonely.*

The effects of closeness to Allah are amazing. According to the Holy Prophet (s) of Islam, Almighty Allah has said: *No servant of mine gets closer to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the obligatory acts. Then (after that) He seeks nearness to Me through recommended acts until I love him. So when I love him I become his hearing through which he hears, and his eyes through which he sees, and his tongue through which he speaks, and his heart through which he understands. If he calls to Me I answer him, and if he asks from Me, I grant him.*

Imam Ali (a) in Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 222, says about such people: *Certainly Allah . . . has made His remembrance the lights for hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness, and become submissive with its help despite unruliness. . . with the help of the bright awakening of their ears, eyes and hearts, they keep reminding others of the remembrance of the days of Allah, and make others feel fear for Him like guide-points in wilderness. . . they removed the curtains . . . till it was as though they were seeing what people did not see and were hearing what people did not hear.*

The months of Rajab, Sha'ban and Ramadhan are great opportunities for seeking nearness to Allah. Believers are given a chance to get closer through fasting, recitation of du'as, seeking forgiveness, attending gatherings of Majalis and A'maal, and generally being more conscious of their duties towards Allah. This heightened awareness allows the human being to progress in his journey towards Allah. It increases spirituality and breaks through the veil that is a barrier to achieving nearness to Allah.

Thus these holy months are a special Grace from the Almighty to allow the believer to attain that which will bring him the most happiness and peace. Every small effort in these months can have great effects. When a believer tries to move closer to Allah, even in small degrees, Allah also moves closer to Him. He says in a Hadithe Qudsi: *Whoever moves towards me an inch, I move towards him a foot. And whoever walks towards me, I run towards him.*

May the Almighty help us attain nearness to Him