

Theology and Worship in Nahjul balagha - Session Four

Quote for Reflection

Man's true perfection is found in proximity to Allah, the Exalted, and the means of attaining this proximity is spiritual service and worship.

Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi

Provisions for the Journey, Vol.2

Agenda

- Verses from the Quran
- Understanding worship in Islam
- Worship and Servitude
- Soul of worship
- Examples from Nahjul Balagha

From the Quran

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي
لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say. Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life
and my death are for Allah
the Lord of the worlds

(Sura An'am, no.6, verse 162)

Understanding Worship

- Worship [*'ibādātallāh*] denotes submitting and yielding to Allah.
- Worship is not a set of rituals which are separate from life. Types of worship such as prostration, the ritual prayers . . . are instances of submission.
- The essence of worship is constituted by two elements. One is belief and intention while the other is actual humility and lowliness (belief and action).

Regarding the issue of the Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) in worship, the Holy Qur'an has focused on the following concepts:

1. Godhood or Divinity (*ulūhiyyah*);
2. Mastership or Ownership (*mālikiyyah*);
3. Creatorship (*khāliqiyyah*); and
4. Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*).

The best of people is he who longs for worship and embraces it, loves it with his heart, throws himself into it with his whole body, and devotes himself exclusively to it, such that he is not concerned in what worldly state he wakes up in the morning; in difficulty or in ease.

Holy Prophet (s)

Scale of Wisdom, H#3926

Worship and Servitude

Servitude to Allah consists of five things;

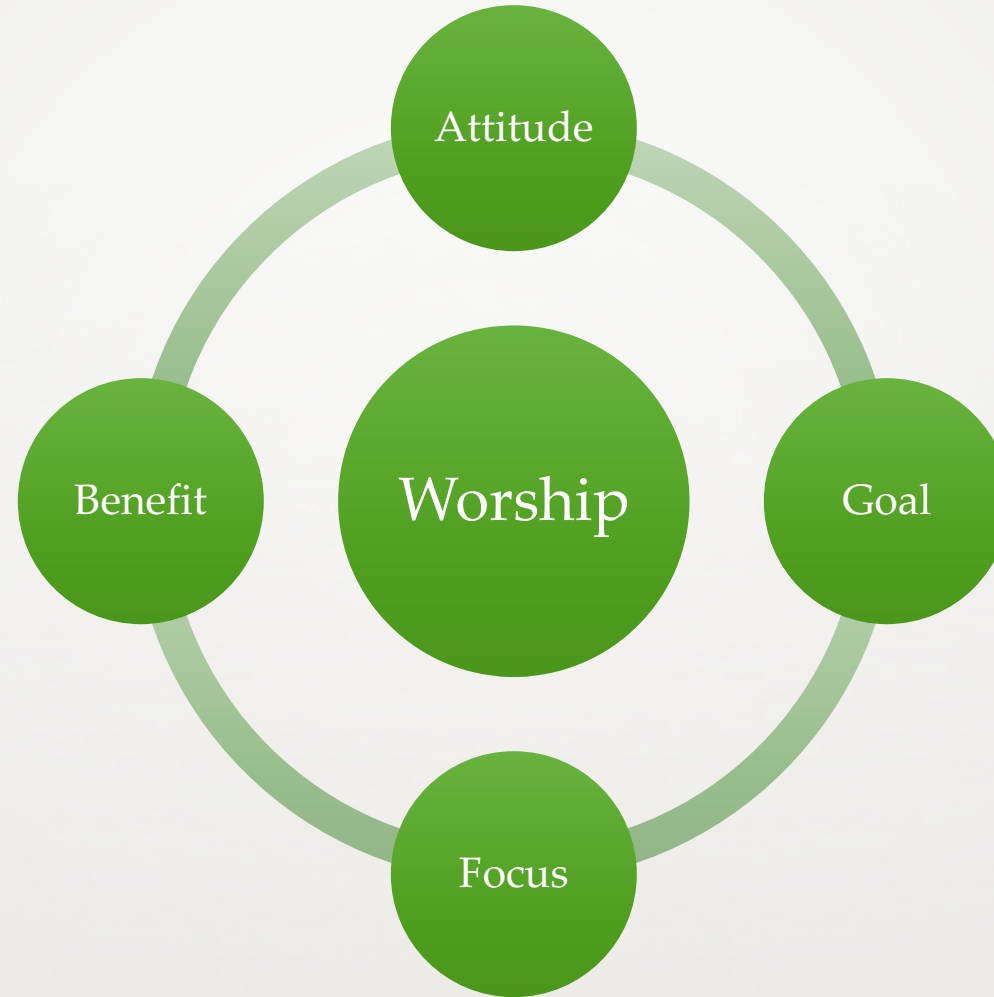
- 1) Keeping the stomach empty
- 2) Reciting the Quran
- 3) Performing the night prayer
- 4) Imploring Allah at dawn
- 5) Crying much from fear of Allah

Imam Ali (a), Scale of Wisdom, H#3930

Levels of worship

- Worship of the trader – Expecting a reward in return.
- Worship of the slave – Out of fear of the wrath of Allah.
- Worship of the free man – Out of gratitude and love for Allah.

Soul of worship



Examples from Nahjul Balagha

Thus, the God-fearing, in it are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point, their dress is moderate and their gait is humble. They keep their eyes closed to what Allah has made unlawful for them, and they put their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them. They remain in the time of trials as though they remain in comfort.

(Khutba #193)

If there had not been fixed periods (of life) ordained for each, their spirits would not have remained in their bodies even for the twinkling of an eye . . . The greatness of the Creator is seated in their heart, and, so, everything else appears small in their eyes. Thus to them Paradise is as though they see it and are enjoying its favours. To them, Hell is also as if they see it and are suffering punishment in it

(Khutba #193)

During the night they are up standing on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them. And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears.

(Khutba #193)