

# ALI 525

CULTIVATING A VIRTUOUS CHARACTER

# Session Two Outline

- ▶ Brief Summary of Last Week
- ▶ Representing God on Earth
- ▶ Transformative Practices

# Summary of Last Session

- ▶ We are only truly human when we fulfill our purpose for creation
- ▶ We have two interconnected purposes:
  - ▶ Servants
  - ▶ Representatives of God on Earth
- ▶ Each of these purposes has an outward and inward dimension
- ▶ The Inner dimension of servanthood is acceptance of God's will

# Representing God

- ▶ To be a representative is an active role with two dimensions:
  - ▶ Outwardly, it means to follow the course of action that is most pleasing to God
  - ▶ Inwardly, it means to cultivate Godliness within yourself by reflecting God's Divine Names and Qualities
- ▶ Example of the President and Ambassador
- ▶ Questions??

# Representing God

- ▶ The role of representation can be understood by the Story of Nabi Adam
- ▶ The Breath of God:

*When your Lord said to the angels; Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust: So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him. and the angels did obeisance, all of them, But not Iblis: he was proud and he was one of the unbelievers. (38:71-74)*

# Representing God

► The Knowledge of the “Names of Things”:

*He taught adam all the names, then presented them to the angels; then He said: Tell me the names of those if you are right. They said: Glory be to Thee! we have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us; surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise. He said: O adam! inform them of their names. Then when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I surely know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and (that) I know what you manifest and what you hide?*

(2:31-33)

# Representing God

- ▶ The Quran as the self disclosure of God
- ▶ God reveals Himself to us so, and through this revelation, we can return to God
- ▶ We can learn about God by His Names and Qualities:

*And Allah's are the best names, therefore call on Him thereby, and leave alone those who violate the sanctity of His names; they shall be recompensed for what they did.. (7:180)*

# Representing God

*Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent Allah; then look again, can you see any disorder? (67:3)*

- ▶ When we are permeated with the Names and Qualities of God in perfect balance and integration that we live in a state of *tawhid*, that is, oneness and *ihsan*, that is, beauty.



# Representing God

- ▶ Imam Ali:

*In everything I see, I see Allah before it, Allah in it, and Allah after it*

- ▶ Imam Zain al-Abideen

*O Allah, I don't know if I should praise you more when I am sick or when I am healthy.*

Questions??

# Transformative Practices

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All 525: Virtue, 2 Ses

- ▶ Awareness that turns us away from the world and turns us towards God:
- ▶ Can never achieve anything except by the Grace of God

*O you who believe! do not follow the footsteps of the Shaitan, and whoever follows the footsteps of the Shaitan, then surely he bids the doing of indecency and evil; and were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing (24:21)*

# Transformative Practices

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ALI 525: Virtue, 2 Ses

- ▶ The Paradox: If nothing good comes except from Allah ...
- ▶ Hadith Qudsi:

*If [my servant] draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him in an arm's length; if he draws to Me an arm's length, I draw closer to him by 2 arms length; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.*

- ▶ Example of the King
- ▶ Questions??

# Transformative Practices

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AlI 525: Virtue, 2 Ses

- ▶ Three types of prayers
- ▶ Du'a is not confined by space or time
- ▶ It is the weapon of the believer and the key of fulfillment and success
- ▶ Make supplication frequently and intimately
- ▶ Questions??

# Transformative Practices

- ▶ Remembrance = goodness & forgetfulness = evil
- ▶ We already know what we need to know:

*We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? (41:53)*

*And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them? Verily, in it is Mercy and a reminder to those who believe (29:51)*

# Transformative Practices

- ▶ The essence of the human being is the soul, and the essence of the soul is the heart
- ▶ The Inner Heart is a place of illumination and knowledge

*Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts. (22:46)*

*Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge: and none but the unjust reject Our Signs. (29:49)*

# Transformative Practices

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Ali 525: Virtue, 2 Ses

- ▶ Knowledge of the heart cannot be learned from other. It has to be realized for oneself.
- ▶ The illumination and knowledge of the heart is connected to the remembrance of God
- ▶ Imam Ali:

*Whoever remembers Allah...Allah enlivens his heart and illuminates his intellect and the innermost core of his heart.*

*Perpetuate the the remembrance of God, for truly it illuminates the heart and is the most excellent form of worship.*

# Transformative Practices

- ▶ Three things happen when we remember God by his Name and Qualities
  - ▶ 1. Polish the mirror of our hearts
  - ▶ 2. Cultivate the godly Qualities within us (understand what this means)
  - ▶ 3. See God everywhere
- ▶ Questions??