

## Making Decisions – The Islamic Way

We often find it difficult to make decisions. In the vast array of choices available in today's world, it is sometimes hard to know what the right course of action is. Should I take up this new position? Sell my house and move? Put my child in this particular school? Many different consequences might result from my decision, some of them undesirable.

We make decisions all the time; everyday decisions such as what to eat, what to wear, how to spend time, etc. and major decisions that greatly impact life, such as choosing a spouse, a career, a job etc. Both types of decisions need thought and consideration. Both, over time, determine the path my life will take.

It is for this reason that Islam emphasizes strong and firm decisions. Life is a sum total of the decisions I make every day. I need to make decisions that are founded upon wisdom and determination. *Azmul Irada*, or a resolute will is a desired quality of a believer. In a dua taught by Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a) he says: *I know that the best preparation for the one who travels towards You is a firm will with which he chooses You.* *Azm* is an important quality. The *Ulul Azm* are the Messengers who were given Shariah, and who had the firmness and determination to be able to convey the message.

Islam has shown us the following ways to make firm decisions:

1) Know your goal in life and see if the course of action you want to take is in accordance with it. Does it conform to your goal and help you attain it, or would it be a hindrance? If it would deter you from your goal, or even slow you down in your journey towards it, discard the idea.

2) Weigh the pros and cons of the action. List them and see what is more important. Are the disadvantages worth the advantages, or do they outweigh them? Don't decide on an action that has more serious disadvantages than advantages. Imam Ali (a) says: *Do not decide on that in which you don't see reason.*

3) Ponder over the end result of your action. The Holy Prophet (s) says: *When you consider an action, reflect upon its end.* We often look at the immediate results, but we actually need to consider its far reaching consequences.

4) Do not be influenced in your decision by your fear of what people will say. It is all right to seek advice, for Allah says in the Quran: *and consult them in affairs* (3:159). Wisdom means you seek the counsel of wise people. But the ultimate decision is your own, guided by the wisdom of others but not induced by the fear of others.

Once a decision is made, we must not waver or fluctuate. Many times we doubt if the decision was correct. Perhaps I should have done it, or shouldn't have done it . . . If we have followed the right steps then we need to trust in Allah for a good outcome. Allah says in the same verse above (3:159), *Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).*

Note: all Hadith quoted from Mizanul Hikmah, Muhammad ar-Ray Shahri