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Spreading the Message of Islam

## Avoiding extremes in worship

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**QUESTION: How does Islam teach Muslims to avoid going to extremes in worship?**

**ANSWER:**

Islam commands Muslims to be balanced and moderate in their acts of worship between being 1) lax and lazy and 2) harsh and extreme.

These are the two extremes, and Islam forbids taking matters to extremes.

And how often do we see problems when people take matters to extremes!

**So stand firm, and straight as you are commanded with those (your companions) who turn in repentance with you – and do not transgress!**

[Soorah Hood (the 11th chapter) verse 112]

This verse contains guidelines about performing worship correctly.<sup>1</sup> Muslims should have istiqamah (which means steadfastness) upon carrying them out in a moderate way, without transgressing into negligence or exaggeration – in strict accordance with the Islamic legislation.

A hadeeth (narration about Muhammad (peace be upon him) serves to illustrate this point.

Three men came to the Muhammad (peace be upon him) and they were concerned about their acts of worship being insignificant. So they decided to increase in acts of worship.

One of them said: ‘I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast’.

Another said: “I will pray throughout the night forever.”

Another said: ‘I will keep away from the women and will not marry ever.’

Muhammad (peace be upon him) rebuked them by saying:

<sup>1</sup> Refer to ‘Aqeedah ut Tawheed p68 of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan for more information

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**'Are you the same people who said such and such? By Allaah I am more submissive to Allaah and have more fear of and dutifulness to Allaah than you – yet I fast and I break my fast. I offer my prayers and also sleep. And I marry women. So whoever turns away from my Sunnah then he is not from me.'**

(This is a hadeeth reported by one of the great scholars of hadeeth called Imaam Bukhaaree).

The two groups who have gone to the extremes in worship can be thought of in two broad categories:

The first group due to lack of understanding about worship, have become lax in performing it – so they end up doing very little.

They restrict themselves to a few practices and perform these only in the mosque. "Islam is for the mosque."

As for life in the home, or at work, or in the shops, etc, then they give very little importance to worship in these places.

In Islam, the mosque does have a special virtue but worship is not limited to its four walls. Rather Islam teaches that the whole of the Muslim's life is encompassed by worship, both inside the mosque and outside it.

The second group went to the other extreme, going overboard (as opposed to being lax), being too harsh.

These people take aspects of Islam which are recommended to do, and tell people that these things are in fact obligatory for everyone to do.

They also take things which are Islamically permissible to do, and tell people that they are instead forbidden.

And then they declare everyone who disagrees with them to be misguided and astray.

Clearly both of these groups are wrong.

This illustrates an important point that we have touched upon before. Moderation lies in learning about what Islam actually teaches and following it – not using benchmarks and ideas which people have made up from their own minds.

As history has shown many many times, when Muslims start moving away from learning what Islam actually teaches and then putting it into practice, problems occur.

And sadly we are seeing this in our time as well.