

BE WARY OF PUBLICIZING YOUR GOOD DEEDS

SHEIKH SALMAN AL-OADAH

People often deceive themselves by becoming show-offs under the pretense of making casual conversation. There are people who cannot sit with others without saying: "I did this and I did that... I spent so much in charity..."

Sometimes they can be a bit more subtle – usually deceiving themselves more than those with whom they are speaking – saying things like: "Actually, I cannot stay up in prayer at night more than two hours..." or: "Unfortunately, I cannot cope with fasting every day, so I must suffice with fasting on Mondays and Thursdays...". By saying these things, they want to show others just how much they are praying and fasting.

The reason people fall into this trap is an inward desire to earn the people's praise. This is why it is preferable for most acts of worship to be done in private. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"O people! Pray in your homes, for truly the best prayers are those that a person prays at home, with the exception of the prescribed prayers."** [Sahîh al-Bukhârî (731)]

It is, therefore, preferable for voluntary prayers to be made in the privacy of one's own home. This protects the worshiper from the whispers of Satan and makes certain that the prayers are not being performed for show. It also prevents the home from becoming like a graveyard where no prayers are made. A further benefit of praying at home is that it impresses upon the children of the house the importance of prayer.

However, voluntary prayers that are supposed to be made in congregation are an exception to this rule, like the eclipse prayers, the prayer for rain, the Tarâwîh prayer, and the two `Îd prayers (if we deem the `Îd prayers to be voluntary).

The same goes for charity. Allah says: **"If you make public your charity, it is well, but if you conceal it and give it to the poor, then it is better for you."** [Sûrah al-Baqarah: 271]

This is why a person should generally give charity in secret and not give it publicly unless he or she can make sure not to fall into showing off and sees that making it public will bring about some greater good. Sometimes public charity can encourage others by example.

However, some people do charitable works publicly out of a desire for public approval. Some even do so hoping to get their names printed in the papers or to receive official recognition for their works. If the intention of such individuals is to garner more public support for the charitable efforts in question, then it is good. Otherwise, it is merely showing off.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"Actions are but by intentions, and every person will only get what he intended."** [Sahîh al-Bukhârî (1)]

Allah says: **"Whether you hide your words or make them known, He certainly has full knowledge of what is in the hearts. Should He who created not know, and He is the Subtle, the Aware?"** [Sûrah al-Mulk: 13-14]

Some people fall victim to the opposite affliction. They become so scared of showing off that they avoid performing good deeds because of it. They have jumped from the frying pan into the fire, so to speak.

True sincerity is to be concerned with Allah and to disregard the people altogether, neither performing deeds because of them nor abstaining from deeds on their account.

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