

**Tazkiyah Halaqa
Mortality – Session 22
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh**

November 25, 2025
Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Overview

This session marks a return from the “ṣalāh tips” interlude to a core tazkiyah pillar: accepting **mortality** and accountability before Allah. Sheikh Adnan frames this topic as the “crowd thinner” because people avoid it, yet he argues that without it, Islamic ethics and spiritual reform lose their grounding and persuasive force. The lecture is explicitly an introduction intended to be lighter in content but deeper in contemplation, with a caution that certain listeners (e.g., those in mental health crises) should approach the material carefully.

The five pillars (his framework)

Sheikh Adnan outlines his own five-pillar structure for tazkiyah (not claiming it is the only valid breakdown), presented as a practical teaching framework learned from teachers and readings. In his ordering, the pillars include: self-value; accepting mortality and accountability; self-honesty/self-accountability (previous module); sensitivity and etiquette; and moral frugality/asceticism (zuhd/wara’). He positions mortality/accountability as indispensable—removing it collapses the “equation” of the dīn.

Two kinds of accountability

A key conceptual clarification is the distinction between:

- **Self-accountability (muḥāsabah):** the inward practice of scrutinising intentions, thoughts, and actions to change the nafs.
- **Ultimate accountability (Yawm al-Qiyāmah):** the belief that resurrection occurs and that a transcendent, truthful judge (Allah) will hold one to account for what was done and neglected.

Sheikh Adnan argues that the second is not a redundant theological add-on, but the structural premise that makes the first fully coherent and motivating.

Mortality versus “death”

He differentiates between *death* as an unknown point event (time/place/manner unknown) and *mortality* as the existential reality that one’s life will end. He explicitly discourages obsessing over the moment of death, describing it as unproductive and psychologically harmful, while insisting that accepting mortality is necessary and transformative. He also notes that death is always a “muṣībah” (a grievous loss) because it ends a person’s opportunity to do good, repent, and remain with loved ones, so Islam does not “celebrate death” even in cases like martyrdom.

Adam and the fear of mortality

The central narrative frame is the Qur’anic story of Adam: despite possessing security, beauty, provision, companionship, and closeness to Allah, Adam was vulnerable at the point

where Iblīs marketed the promise of *khuld* (immortality). Sheikh Adnan argues that the decisive temptation was not mere curiosity (“forbidden things are desired”), but the fear of mortality; once immortality was suggested, Adam’s attention shifted and he was lured into the first act of disobedience. He then extends the point through a reported story in which Adam, shown his progeny, fixates on the lifespan of Dawūd and offers 40 years of his own life—only to later feel the pull to reclaim them when his end approaches—illustrating how powerful the attachment to life remains even for the most honoured human.

Why mortality creates urgency

A philosophical argument is then offered: if humans were immortal, time would lose value and procrastination would become rational (“I’ll do it tomorrow”), eroding motivation for meaningful choice and action. Mortality makes time the only non-recoverable capital, creating urgency, purpose, and a basis for disciplined moral striving. Sheikh Adnan stresses that the aim is not to “celebrate” mortality, but to accept it as a reality that could materialise at any time, while remaining at peace rather than paralysed.

Modern avoidance of death

Sheikh Adnan argues that contemporary people—especially in the West—often encounter death later in life due to modern medicine and improved living conditions, making death feel like a “foreign visitor” rather than a familiar reality. He contrasts this with earlier generations who experienced death frequently and early, claiming (as an illustrative statistic) that median lifespan in the 7th century was far lower than today, and that early Muslims therefore had more daily “friction” with mortality. He links modern distance from death to immature emotional responses, denial, and the human “exemption” bias: accepting that everyone dies while tacitly treating oneself as an exception.

The “good ending” and exemplars

The session connects mortality acceptance to *ḥusn al-khātimah* (a good ending), arguing that endings define the moral weight of a life more than beginnings. Sheikh Adnan cites exemplars—Prophet Muhammad’s acceptance at the end (“choosing the heavenly companion”), Abu Bakr correcting speech toward Allah-pleasing words, Umar asking to be placed with his face on the ground, Uthman murdered while reading Qur’an without authorising violent defence, Bilāl smiling at reunion with beloveds, and a story of Imam al-Ḥaddād rebuking well-meaning prompts to say shahādah—presented as patterns of preparedness and serenity rooted in a cultivated relationship with mortality.

Clinical insight and practical contemplation

Drawing on oncology experience, Sheikh Adnan observes varied reactions to mortality, including cases of elderly patients still bargaining for “two more years” indefinitely, illustrating that death is never “far enough” unless perspective changes. He recommends careful, non-harmful contemplation of one’s own mortality: imagining what it would feel like if it happened, what regrets would surface, and how priorities would reorder—while warning that those struggling with severe anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation should not engage this practice without appropriate support. He closes by stating that fear and avoidance of death often drive sinful or misaligned decisions, and that the Prophet foretold an ummah weakened by a paralysing fear of death—making this topic non-optional within tazkiyah.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZydgE-N_xZA