

**Tazkiyah Halaqa
Self Honesty – Session 7
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Transcription

So maybe six months after we started Open Wellness, we started the Tezkiyya program, and I started it with the Shabab at the beginning. It was actually their request, not my initiative, and we've been running it since with them. Approximately a year later, we started it for the sisters. So sometime in mid-2023, we started for the And I have to, I have to admit this a couple of times: it's probably been the most challenging of the halaqat that I've ever taught. Not the one of the sisters specifically, but in general, Tezkiyya in general. has been the most challenging. And I think one of the reasons is that it's the context in which I learned this knowledge and I sought it, I seek, I obtained it.

It's very different than the context through which I am teaching it. And the method through which I learned it is different than the method that I am actually teaching it as well. The concepts are the same; like what I'm teaching is not none of the ideas am I making up as I go along or I am, however, you know, improvising or doing Ishtihad in terms of the how, or the examples, or the methodology. But the concepts are the same. I've held on to that. However, the change in context and the difference. In circumstances, it has presented to me a lot of observations, challenges, and questions that I never ran into when I was learning it— not even as experiences of the people who were with me.

Like most of us, if most people if they do the task that they're given, we'll run into the same types of questions because on a kind of basic level we're all pretty same. As human beings, when we're presented with similar situations, we have similar reactions. At least there's a spectrum within we all kind of have similar experiences. But this has been different, and I think the difference for me is not just the fact that I didn't learn this from scholars. who were female, nor did I ever teach this to women before. But also, I think the context of the country that we're living in and maybe the upbringing experience that people have is very with me. Nonetheless, I found it also one of the most enriching halaqat that I've run for me.

Like, I've learned a ton from just doing this because of what I've had, the questions I've had to, and the issues that I've had to deal with and the challenges that people run into. So it's kind of formed, or it's guided to a certain degree, the method of how I'm teaching it. And I did reach out to a number of my colleagues and kind of sub-teachers who I learned from when I was in Syria. Many of them, like my actual teachers, they all kind of passed away over the last 10 years. They were all kind of old when I left. And the ones who are left are the kind of people who were a little bit ahead of me. And we've consulted, and I talked to them about this halaqat and how to run it and what the way.

Because there is a specificity to this ilm, to this discipline. This discipline is very different than other disciplines. It's different than learning tafsir, for example, or aqidah or fiqh. It's not Tezkiyya is different Tezkiyya is a very delicate. If you're not willing to practice the topics that are being taught, if you're. not willing to experiment with them and try, then you will end up with a lot of theory. Theory that you could use to harm yourself even more. Tezkiyya, that's why it's a very specific. It has a very special place within Islamic disciplines.

It's not always, it's not volunteered to everyone at every age and every manner. Because not only are you listening to the information I'm giving you, but your nafs is too.

And if you are not using this information to improve, then your nafs will use it to worsen the situation. Let me tell you, I'm going to give you an example of what I mean here by a story or a Syrian proverb that is one of the worst proverbs. of all time. But it's still there, and it comes from this problem. And they say this is what they would say if you drop your wallet: hope that a simple person finds it. Hope that a simple person finds it, because they'll give it back to you. If someone who has a little bit of Islamic knowledge finds a fatwa, why they can take it for themselves. Now, this is obviously untrue and wrong on so many levels, but you understand where this is coming from.

It's coming from the fact that if you learn certain types of knowledge and you don't use it to improve yourself, if you don't practice it appropriately, then that knowledge— the same knowledge. can be used to harm you. How do I know? Where do I get this from? Well, I get this from a number of Qur'an verses and hadith. I'm going to quote one of them for you just to make it very clear: The narration of Imam Muslim where the Prophet ﷺ says that, and this is the wording of the people who the heat of Jahannam will be cranked up with, meaning we're going to heat up Jahannam for punishment. We're going to use certain people. Who are these people who are in this extremely scary hadith?

He points out a hafidh or a qari, an alim, and a shaheed, and a kareem, like a jawad. He'll point out a scholar. He'll point out a shaheed, someone who dies on the battlefield. someone who is a philanthropist someone who is a hafidh of the Qur'an. May Allah protect all of us. He points out these people. Why? This is why, because you learn all that knowledge, but then you didn't use it for yourself, it backfires horribly. It really backfires. So why is it? That's why tazkiyah is so important, because tazkiyah is the barrier, it's the protection, it's the shield. It allows you inshaAllah not to be that person, not to be in that position where you learn the knowledge and you learn and it didn't help you.

So it has to be learned, and definitely the piece that I've started with at least this second iteration of Tezkiah. I'm going to call it; it's not the second, it's probably the fifth iteration because we've changed this around. I've changed it around so many times, but this iteration we started with self-awareness or self-honesty because I don't think-I think it's probably the piece that we should begin with, at least for the purpose of this group. So there, we're going to do it. We're going to run from 8 to 9 or to Maghrib. I'll give the lecture; I'll give the information that I want to share with you this week, along with maybe what you should do, like what task you should do. Forgive me for saying it so bluntly if you have no interest in performing the.

tasks please don't attend I'm sorry I'm very ashamed to say this it's a shame to say this. If you have no interest in performing the tasks and trying this, you're not going to benefit from attending this. You will later on actually be harmed from it because the importance of you getting the benefit from this knowledge if you are capable or willing to actually go out and try something and fail and try and fail and get frustrated a couple of times and try again. If you're not willing to do that, then this is not going to help you. You can get the same information from a self-help book; you can just go read one of those books they probably even put it together in a better way, and you're less accountable on the Day of Judgement for it.

But this year, what I'm teaching you here, you have to actually practice it, and you have to be willing to keep on practicing it until it functions. And you have to have that perseverance

and that grit to make sure that you're willing to see it through. Which is why, after each session, the brothers, because after Maghrib there's the Qur'an program, the brothers will use the classroom, and the shabab and the sisters can use the extension. And I'll come in for follow up; I'll make sure that they can do the, and then I can answer any questions that are stuck around or have private conversations in smaller groups to help with the topic itself. Because this does require follow-up, but tazkiyah is not like seerah, for example. Seerah, I don't care.

I honestly come in blind. It doesn't matter to me. I've started seerah halaqat with one child who's asleep. It doesn't matter; I don't care. I'll speak to anything, to anyone, because I'm just offering you, I'm just telling you the story. I'm just offering you the You can do with what you will. Same thing goes for tafsir and fiqh. All these sessions, if one person shows up, I think we did fiqh Hanbali. It was me, Omar, and Maryam Al Azhar. Two of us who were attending two people who were attending the session. That's fine. When it comes to tazkiyah, it's not the same. Tazkiyah is different; tazkiyah requires follow-up, and it requires people who are going to actually try and perform the actions. Because when you try something and you experience it, now you end up with a question.

My job in this whole story is not to answer all your questions. My job is to equip you with the mindset, the approach, the logic that will allow you to figure out the answers to your questions as you go along. Because it's impossible, it's impossible for anyone, for any scholar, for any teacher to answer every question that you're going to have regarding aspects of Because what aspects of tazkiyah are are the struggles of the human soul with life? This is impossible to break down into one session or two sessions or a million questions, really. So you can't always afford to find someone; you're not going to be able always to find someone who can answer your question once you want it.

But if you learn how to approach your questions, how to actually deal with this: why am I feeling this way? How do you deal with that question? You can just take that question and go pay someone and say, 'Answer this question for me And they can sit there and they can help you, and that's fine. But in life, I think it's more valuable if you learn how to do this yourself. And that's what tazkiyah is: it's learning how to perform this function on your own, and it's very, very valuable if you learn to do so. Which is why we started with this first topic, which is self-honesty. And this is our seventh session, so we've run it for maybe a month and a half now.

I still have maybe three or four sessions left in it, and this is for any of the larger concepts in tazkiyah; they take between two and three months to cover just the basic information that you need to know. At the end, we'll do a bit of a summary, but I would advise. you if you're just starting to attend to go back to the lectures, the six lectures that have been recorded, and listen to them. They're an hour each, and make sure that you take some notes for yourself. This is probably one of the series where taking notes either during or after will be of value to you. Because most of the exercises that I'll be offering you will be reflective in nature, most of them.

Some of them won't, and we'll come to them, and I'll ask you to do an actual specific action. You have to try and do it, and it may be a bit challenging for you. But most of the work is reflective in nature. It's just your ability to sit and contemplate. Or reflect or think about certain topics and actually dive deeply into your comprehension of them. And self-honesty, which we've covered quite a bit of topics quite a bit of angles surrounding, is embedded in the most important Islamic ethic or most important human ethic. So when we say self-honesty, right, we're using this term a lot: be honest with yourself. Well, just before we

kind of go back to that, just take honesty for a second and think about it. Think about what importance does honesty actually have in our Deen? Because I feel that if you invest some time in self-honesty and learning what that means, how to kind of hold yourself accountable and how to be self critical then you'll appreciate more how much the Qur'an invested in the concept of and how much the Prophet ﷺ invested in the concept of The reason that they invested in honesty so much was not exclusively or even for the majority being honest with other people

not necessarily with other people There's actually a lot of exceptions of where you don't have to be honest with other people There's not one exception for when you don't be honest with yourself Like in the concept of honesty there's a lot of exemptions where in this situation you don't have to tell the truth where war for example or if you're complimenting a loved one, or if you're trying to perform sulh between people, or if you're being asked. Like there's a lot of situations where the rule of being honest in terms of what you say to people can be bent, or can be. But there's not one exemption for being honest with yourself, not one. Think about that. Every law has an Every rule has one.

When it comes to being honest with yourself, there's not one exception to that. At all times, in every way, you're always honest with yourself. It's the one person that you have to be fully transparent with at all times order for you to be transparent with Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala. which is the merit of your relationship with Him? Like the only way for the relationship with Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala to work is if you're honest with Him. The only way you can be honest with Him is if you're honest with yourself. And people don't even fall into that category at all. Like people, your relationship with people doesn't even exist in this vicinity. Honesty really is at its peak importance exists between you and Allah. And that requires honesty between you and yourself.

And then what you do with people, that's a whole different story. What you do with people is a consequence of that. Like it becomes a consequence of whether you're honest with Allah and yourself or not. It comes down to a very simple idea. If you are used to lying to yourself about things, then you built a habit that allows you to do it more comfortably around other people. If you have rejected in your mind, in your heart, in your life lying to yourself, telling yourself something that's not true about what just happened or what's happening, or who you are, or where you're going, or why you did what you did, then it becomes difficult to lie to people. Like in your life, it's almost impossible to do that externally.

Because we know, we know this psychologically, that whatever you do internally. you do externally. And whatever you do not do internally, you don't do externally. And that's how you actually learn about yourself. And that's how we know about behavior of people and children. So when you see a child for yelling or screaming or punching, or you know that this is what is this, it's a reflection of something that's happening inside of them. Like there's a struggle that's happening on the inside that's just manifesting itself in behavior that you're seeing externally. So we all know that. That's been known since the beginning of time that how you behave externally is just a reflection of how you are struggling internally. So, people who lie externally, people who lie to others, it's only because they have begun— they've been lying to themselves for a long time.

And it comes from a struggle that they have internal. Once they fix that, one, this one is easy. This one is not a problem. It's not difficult to actually get rid of. The easiest piece to fix is lying to people. That's the easiest one. Because, really, there are so many different ways in Islam to learn that people don't matter that much to you. So, the need to lie to

them isn't really there. Why do you lie? You have to think about... In order for you to learn self-honesty, you have to understand why do people lie. Well, people lie either for gain or for fear, right? You can say embarrassment. Well, embarrassment is fear. You're afraid of being seen in a certain way. Or gain; you want to be seen in a certain way.

So when you stop caring what people think about you, you don't see the point of lying anymore. Like, it just it's not it loses its aura because there's there's nothing in it. You're not winning anything; you're not losing anything. And the lie is just a waste of time. So that piece is actually the easiest one to fix. And I know it sounds weird because that's what we want to fix. We want people to be honest with one another; you're dealing with a symptom you're dealing with a symptom you haven't dealt with the actual problem. The problem is a lack of self-honesty, like it's the lack of something that should be happening on the inside. If it was happening appropriately on the inside, then it's not hard to do on the outside.

You can do that; you actually wouldn't be able. It's impossible. It's not something that happens that you're honest with yourself, but you lie to other people. No, no, no. You can't be honest with yourself and lie to others. You can't be honest with yourself and honest with Allah and then lie to people. Impossible, impossible. It doesn't happen; it doesn't happen. Lying to people is just a symptom of the lack of that self-honesty that we have on the inside. I want to make the connection today between self-honesty and self-value because it came up so many times. I was hoping to leave it to the end but I want to bring it up today just so that it helps maybe those who are struggling with it.

When we talked about, we haven't talked about self-value in this iteration, but I've been talking about it for the last maybe four three four years now. And what we've established, or what I've tried to establish for those who are attending this halaq or this series, is that self-value is something that is divine in nature and it's solid, it's a constant, it's not a. It is granted to you by Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala. No one, and we're going to talk about that in some degree of depth inshallah once we cover this topic. But that's self-value. Your value does not increase or decrease. Nothing you do makes you more valuable as a human being or less valuable as a human being.

Yes, your value in relation to a team, for example, or in relation to a family, or in relation to a job that you do can increase and decrease. I'm more valuable as a team of an oncology group than I am of an MBA team. They're not the same at all. But that does not affect my personal self-value as a human being. So how do I explain this? You're not more human if you're closer to God, nor are you less human if you're farther away from God. Nothing will make you more human or less human, so your value is the same. If you learn that, then you don't really need anything I'm going to say now. If you haven't learned that yet and you still derive value from different sources, you allow yourself to derive value from different sources, then self-honesty can be a.

If you're deriving your value from how you see yourself, your opinion of yourself, then you are more likely to lie to yourself so that you can feel better about yourself. If you use your opinion of yourself as a source of self-value, then it's hard for you to be honest with yourself because that means your opinion is going to decrease for sure. Once we're honest with ourselves, the first thing that happens is that we're like, yeah, this is not good. No, I'm not doing this right. This whole thing needs to be turned around. We have to make some radical changes here, and we have to actually start moving forward and removing these things. So you have to. But if you derive value from how you view yourself, then that's going to be much more difficult.

So people are more likely to lie to themselves about things. We're more likely to lie to ourselves about how good we are or how bad we are because we don't want to lose that vision, that view that we have of. And that goes in many things, like in many. Like you believe that you're very good at it, for example. Let me give you a simple, silly example, but something that you believe you're very good at— a game that you like playing. You believe you're really good at it. And even though you lose here and there, but you're still like I know I'm good at this, I know I'm good at this. But are you really? And how good really are you? And most of us won't tackle that.

We'll just leave it because we like the feeling of just believing. that I'm good at something. And if I say it enough times, it'll become true. And if I tell a few friends, they'll believe it and they'll say it about me. And now it's becoming more true than it ever was, even though I probably am not. So if you derive self-value from being good at this game, for example, whatever sport that you play, then you want to keep that lie going. But if you actually look at what your rank is, or your range in the game is, or the sport that you play, and you figure out that you're not that good at it hurts. So if you attach your self-value to it, then your self-value starts to go down.

It starts to actually plummet because you were deriving value from that. And you understand where I'm going with this. So it becomes problematic. So one of the hindrances of self-honesty, which is what we're talking about here, one of the hindrances is if you are deriving self-value from your opinion of yourself, meaning you're giving an opinion of yourself and you're using that opinion to feel better. And if that's how you're doing it, then it's very hard to be honest with yourself, which is what I'm asking you to do. If you don't have that and your self-value is constant and you don't sugarcoat your opinion of yourself to yourself, then this becomes significantly easier. to do. Even in the context of the silly example I just gave you about the game or the sport that you play, if you are honest with yourself about where you are, how good you are, then you give yourself the room you need to.

You can't improve something if you don't believe that it needs to be improved. How do you fix something if you don't see where it's broken? How do you go upwards if you don't know where you actually are? So even in the context of just a sport or a game that you play, there's no exemption for this rule. There's no exemption. Even if something as silly as that, if you're capable of being honest with yourself on something like. that then even in that game you'll become better. Now take that and extrapolate it to all of life. How good of a husband or a wife you are, how good of a student or a teacher or a father or a colleague or a mentor. We all like to believe that I'm a great friend.

Really? Who told you that? Did you survey all of your friends and they anonymously and unanimously gave you a ranking of 10 out of 10? How do you know that you're a good friend? Have you ever asked your friends honestly to tell you what they think of you as a friend? Have you ever dared to do that? Have you ever dared to do that? We were given this. This is what I'm going to ask you to do actually. Because we were asked to do this and so we had to do it. We had to ask all of our friends in an appropriate way what they thought of us as friends. Hands down, the most heartbreaking experience of my entire life. Hands down. Easily. Easily. It put me into tears. I was 26 years old.

It put me in tears to know that he felt that way about me, that that's how he saw me because I didn't think it was that at all. Because I was never willing to ask the question, so I just said no, I'm a good friend to him. Not in his eyes. Not at all. Not at all. But the reason that we don't do this is because we don't want to know. I'm just happy believing that I'm a

good friend. I feel good about. it My self-value stays nice and stable don't have to know But how are you going to become a better friend if you believe that and you don't take any – you understand what I'm trying to say here You're a stalemate A brother and a sister is a stalemate You put yourself in a position where you will never become better

You will never become better Because you believe you're good you're not willing to take any feedback that tells you the contrary You're not going to seek it You're not going to listen to it and that means you're going to stay stagnant that way until the day you And that is the saddest of self-honesty Not only is it needed For your relationship with Allah, it's needed for you to become a better person in general. You can't become a better person. I want you to try this over the next week. Select a number of people and ask them what they truly, truly think of you. And make it very clear that whatever you say will not be held against you in a court of law or anything else. Like, nothing you say will offend me.

Just let it go. If people truly trust you, they'll tell you. They will actually tell you. And that will be a very valuable lesson. I'm telling you, it's a very valuable thing to learn. And I'm using friends because these are people who love you. Friends are people. that like you. So they'll be nice. There's another later on at the end of self-honesty. I'm going to ask you to ask someone else—not a friend anymore—not a friend anymore. You're going to ask someone else. You're going to ask someone who's not a friend anymore, who's not a friend to you. If you understand the importance of this topic, then what you're going to end up coming to is that I need to know what I'm good at and what I'm not good at.

And if I'm struggling with doing that myself, if I'm looking internally and I can't figure that out for whatever reason, then maybe some help from the outside is important. I need some help from the Outside, so start with the people who love you. Let them tell you feedback. If you get offended, then you haven't learned the importance of self-honesty yet. If you get offended, if it actually bothers you, then you haven't learned. Because someone offering you a piece of information about yourself that you don't have the ability to figure out yourself, they just gifted you something of extreme value to you. They just gifted you something that you would never otherwise be able to. And this piece of information is so vital for you as a person to become better.

That's why Sayyiduna Umar would say رَحِمَ اللهُ رَانَ أَهْدَى إِلَيْنَا. غُيُوبِنَا May Allah have mercy upon someone who gifts us our flaws, who points out to me what I'm not doing well, how I'm not performing well, what I could be better at. Because for Sayyiduna Umar, his obsession in life is to figure out, he's honest with himself, so he's trying to figure out what am I not doing well, how can I improve, how can I get closer to Allah subhanahu wa. So if he can't figure it out, and sometimes it's hard, sometimes life is complicated and you can't figure it out, and there's different reasons for why we sometimes fail at being as honest with ourselves as we need to, getting a piece of feedback from someone is helpful.

If you get offended, the reason you're getting offended is because no, no, you don't want to know the. You want to continue to live this charade. You want this charade to go on. You want to continue to be able to lie to yourself so you don't have to change anything about yourself. But that's the whole point of tazkiyah. The whole point of tazkiyah is that you are finding things that you can improve on, things you can improve in, how you can actually change yourself. That's why self-honesty is one of the main pillars of this discipline. It requires you to be able to look internally. We talked about looking at yourself through your roles. different things that you do. Looking at yourself through ethics, circumstances, like how would you behave regarding these.

Looking at yourself through milestones, like your milestones in your life, things that you've done. Looking at yourself through your timeline, figuring out like what I do. This, but even doing all that, sometimes it's hard to figure it out and accepting, taking in feedback. Not every piece of feedback that you get is going to be 100% correct. That's not the people when they talk about you, when they tell you to your face or behind your back. Not everything they're saying is you, but there's always some truth. In what's being said, there's always going to be some truth in what's being said. Honesty is actually your shield; it protects you. It protects you from the nastiness that can exist around you in your life.

Someone who has that self-honesty is not going to be affected if people say extremely horrible things about them, and they won't feel less about themselves. But they also won't lose their touch with reality if people start saying great things about them, because your ego can be inflated and deflated in both directions. You're honest; there's nothing that they can tell you about you that you don't already know yourself. You haven't told yourself already. If you are waiting for someone else to tell you that you are great or you are good, then you have to kind of take a step back and think about your life. If you need someone to tell you that, if you need a bunch of people to stand there and applaud you and say that you're a great guy or a great lady in order for you to believe it, or if you are living a life where if someone criticizes you, then now you're in panic mode, that means you don't know anything about who you are.

But it should be if you come up to me and start saying all these nice things like, oh mashallah this, mashallah that, I'm like yeah, what do you know about me. What do you know about me? You know nothing about me. I know me. So thank you for your kindness, and I see the words that you're saying as a reflection of how nice you are as a person, but they don't really do anything for me because I know me. And if I don't know me, then my problem is even bigger than I imagined. And that's what you have to think about here: is how do you fix this piece? What I want to share with you today, because this is a piece of self-honesty that I think is probably the most meaningful.

If you remove, and we talked about this at the beginning, but I left it until today because I wanted you to contemplate this a bit. If you remove all of your roles, all of the hats that you wear in your life, I told you to do this at some point. Do that, and then what's left? And some people kind of messaged me about what they felt, and some people didn't really. I don't think most people did it, but I want you to try and do that. In your life, it's very hard; it's a difficult thing to do, but I want you to imagine it. If you lost all of your roles in your life, and when I say roles, I mean I am a I am a spouse, I am a brother, I am a son, I am an employer, employee.

I do a number of things, right? There's all these roles. If all of these roles were taken away from me, so I'm no longer a father, no longer a spouse no longer a son no longer a sibling no longer I don't have a job anymore this hat is taken off I don't wear this hat anymore I can't put the white coat on anymore. You just take them all what's left who's left? Who is left if all those things are taken away? Who's left? This is a very hard one to do. It's easier to ask people what they think of you honestly. This is much more difficult because it's a scary thing to do. Because when you think of it, if they're gone, what does that mean?

Well, it usually means either you're stranded on an island somewhere or people have died, or you went through the biggest catastrophe of your entire life. Like it's a muslima of some sort that's happened, right? But try and do that and think, okay, what is left? Because when we talk about, because Allah subhanahu wa ta ala talks about our roles and he talks about our job, or who we are, he uses two terms. He uses the term khalifa; he uses the term abd,

right? Those are the two terms that he uses subhanahu wa ta ala in the Quran. Khalifa, the steward, means that you have responsibilities, which means you wear hats. Dawood alayhis salaam is the one who was talked about the most in terms of khalifa. Why? Because Dawood wore the most hats.

He was king, he was judge, he was war commander, he was, you know, all the other ones he was teacher he was mentor he was artist he was blacksmith he was all of these things he was a prophet obviously a messenger of Allah subhanahu wa ta ala So he wore all these hats so Allah subhanahu wa ta ala would call him khalifa specifically because look at him look how many responsibilities he carries it's a beautiful thing But then you're also called the abd Why is that Okay So if all the hats are taken off and you have no more roles to play anymore you're not a student anymore you're not you're there's nothing And this can happen in life you can be plucked out of your environment and thrown somewhere where you lose all of your, you know, all of your decorations.

All of the alacrity is gone; you have nothing left for yourself. Who is left? Are you not still there? Is it; do you die if all that happens? If I strip you from all of your roles, do you die? Some people do. Some people lose their brains, they lose their minds; they lack the ability to function anymore. But if you don't, then your consciousness is still there, like you're still a conscious being. What is that consciousness? Define it. Define it. What is left? Because most of us see ourselves through one of the roles, if not many of the roles. But if you can't see yourself as one of those roles anymore. who is left At the bare minimum at the raw in the raw form of your existence who is there

If you're able to perform this reflection it is one of the most powerful things you'll do and you'll do it all the time Because that consciousness you're going I don't know what it is I don't know how to define it anymore Don't worry you're not supposed to define that See Allah Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la defined it for you That's where you're abd that's abdiyyah Khalifah is all the roles but then at the raw existence just who you are with nothing with nothing just sitting in oblivion just being there just being a consciousness who am I You're a abd of Allah Subh. You're a creation, a servant of God Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la. And that is probably one of the most meaningful things that you'll ever be.

It is the most meaningful thing that you and I will ever be in our lives. Knowing that I am a creation created by Allah, smothered with His love and His compassion and His ruh, that's a part of who I am. And you just sit there enjoying all of it. You're at peace with everything around you because you're just you don't need to do anything. You don't need to be anything. You don't need to prove anything. You're just there. And just knowing who you are, being there is extremely peaceful and very. beautiful. And it will put you in a position mentally and spiritually where at the end of the day, remember we talked about states and moments in self-honesty. I talked about a few things. Some people are happy moments; they just have to find moments.

They have to have the next time off that they've planned so they can be happy in that moment. But for the next couple of days it's misery. But then I'm happy then. And there are people who have states. They're in a state of satisfaction, like in a state— that state that I tried to talk to you about, like a few weeks, a number of weeks, or a month ago. It comes from understanding who you are under all. the layers When you peel off all of the onion layers, you remove all of the hats and you get rid of all the rules. Understanding who is left, that consciousness, that simple raw existence of being a servant of Allah Subhanahu wa ta'ala.

Knowing that He is there, that Subhanahu wa ta'ala continues to watch over you, that He Subhanahu wa ta'ala cares for you, that He loves you, that you come directly from Him, Subhanahu wa ta'ala, and you go directly back to Him, Subhanahu wa ta'ala. And you are just right now an extension of life that He has put into the world. And He will take back at one point. Subhanahu wa. And just sitting there, accepting that. is extremely extremely peaceful and very harmonious. But it requires the ability to get rid of everything else. And then obviously when you're done, you put the hats back on and you get up and you work. But now you're putting the hats on, understanding what the basis is.

If you're wearing all the hats and you don't know what the basis is, then it's not going to last. Then it's not going to last. Why do you think people get depressed once they retire from something? Some of these athletes, actors, extremely successful people won every accolade that is known to man, on the front of every big magazine and newspaper celebrated. for years people worshipped them extremely extremely wealthy and then they retire from something and they just can't function and they're miserable and they're unhappy because the only saw them the reason being is because they only saw themselves to be that hat became the hat You're not the hat you're not the role that's not who you are I am a father now but that's not who I am because a decade and a half ago I wasn't so I was still there

You're a spouse right now but that's not who you are because you were not a spouse at one point in your life you're a doctor a lawyer an engineer there was a time where you were none of these Things you were still there, you still existed. So who is that person? Do you know who that person is? Don't be introduced to that person on the Day of Judgment. By the way, make sure that your first introduction to that guy is not the Day of Judgment. Make sure you know that person very well before the Day of Judgment, very, very well, that you're very familiar with who this person is, because that's who's coming on the Day of Judgment. That's who you're going to emerge as. You're going to emerge as the one.

You have no roles; you're not Baba anymore, you're not a boss, you're none of that stuff, you're just you. Do you know who you are? And if you don't and if you're not in harmony with that, then that's going to be a so take time and reflect upon this. Sit down and think, remove those roles, remove those tags. Sit there and imagine, I'm not this, I'm not that. And as you do it, you start to feel insecure, by the way, and it's natural. It's very natural to feel that. You'll start to feel a little bit upset and certain things you won't want to take away, and then you have to take all that, and then you're stuck there and there's nothing left.

And that is your raw form, and that is what it means to be a servant in a position where you are just, you're just at peace with who you are, with what definition. you have you'll always serve him even if he takes away. There's a really famous story that I think most of you have heard of, and I'll share it with you because I think it's helpful here. Obviously, there are a lot of stories that will explain what I'm saying here, but I'll use one that's more during the Khilafah of Sayyidina Umar and at the end of the Khilafah of Abu Bakr when the wars began, when they had to rearrange Arabia and they had to kind of push back the borders because the Romans and the Persians were trying to.

No one likes a new empire kind of coming up; it's a power in the region that no one wants, so the Romans and the Persians. start pushing down the borders. The Sahaba, the Khilafah Rashidah, had to push back the borders and then they actually had to go in and perform the Futuhat. So within this very, very difficult time, this time that was filled with challenges and wars, you had a man by the name of Khalid bin Walid who became beyond a superstar, beyond a superstar. He went, he became a myth. He became the only myth I can talk to

you about that I know actually occurred because is this guy. There must be myths similar to him historically, but I don't have like a proper, I don't have authentic narrations to share with you.

But I know this guy, Sayyidina Khalid who became a myth. He went from just being someone people admired, this guy. His reputation travelled far and wide; people were talking about him. In name, he was coming up. There, in the battles, there's a documented point, a moment during a battle, a guy from the other army, from the Roman army, came out and he demanded to speak to Khalid if he was there. And he was, and he came out. And he said, is it true that you point your sword and then it just lightning, everyone dies? And he said, no, of course not. He said, well, give me your sword. He said, no, I'm not giving you my sword. He said, you're lying. He said, no, here, take my sword.

So the guy stood there; the Sahaba watched. this Roman guy with Khalid Ibn Uri's sword going like this, like this, turning around trying to make it work because they actually believed that they believed that that's how Sayyidina Umar found this out. He completely removed him; he completely demoted him. He did not lead another army for the rest of his life. He did nothing wrong; he did nothing wrong he nothing wrong out of his own accord. He did nothing wrong, but he completely demoted him. The story is that Khalid was seen during the battles carrying the wood like he was working, and people would come and say, "What are you doing? Your name is a household name all across the Muslim world and beyond how could he do this to you how dare he do this to you so Sayyidina Khalid would say

I didn't do this for Umar to stop doing it because of him and wherever Allah puts me I'll serve I was put at the front so I served and now I'm put at the back so I serve the only way I say this with a lot of confidence the only way this man was capable of doing this the only way that he did not cause mutiny in the army and cause a fitna is because this is a person who had such a degree of maturity and self-honesty and comfort that it didn't matter to him what hat was put on his head because he knew who he was under all of it under all of that he knew exactly who he was he was a servant of Allah who was going to continue to work for the sake of Allah. Wherever he was, put up front, at the back, in the basement didn't make a difference to him. He knew why he was there. That requires, you see, most people.

You want a more or less severe example? All of the muhajireen, all of them, all of the muhajireen, everyone who went from Mecca to Medina was demoted, was demoted as a human being. Like they lost, they left Mecca, they left everything behind, left their wealth, they left their nobility, they left their accolade, they left their reputation, their social status, and they went to a city where they were going to be roommates. with people they've never met before, living in a situation that was financially way beneath them, like they were all much wealthier than the people, like anyone who came from Mecca. Even the slaves, even Suhaib al Rumi, was wealthier than the people living in. So you're going to a place now where you don't have a tribe to protect you anymore, you're not known, your name is not known, no one knows you.

The only way that they were able to actually continue is because this didn't matter to them, because they didn't define themselves through the hats that they wore, didn't define themselves through the roles that Allah Subh anaHu Wa. Ta A la gave them, they defined themselves as, and then took upon themselves the responsibilities that Allah Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la threw their way. What responsibilities has he thrown you? He's given you a family to take care of; that's the responsibility that he gave you. InshaAllah, you continue to

have that family for a long time, but you could lose it too. What? You're not an abd anymore. You stopped serving; you're not willing. This is the point; this is the point then.

So that stability, that state of clarity, is just from having the capacity to be honest with yourself, to know exactly who you are. No one should be able to fool you about. you and you definitely should not be fooling yourself about you or else it becomes a problem. When you think of people like Firaun, because it's an interesting example that I want to kind of share with you, Firaun, he stood and he said in the Qur'an **فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى** said these words: I am your Most High God, I am your Most High Lord. He said those words to people publicly. The question is, did he really believe it?

This is a question that's been debated for many centuries, by the way. Did Fir aun believe that when he said it? I'm of the opinion that he probably did. When he said it, he probably did. He probably believed. when he said it that he was actually that you're saying that's impossible. He knows. No, no, no. See, this is why this topic is so important. This is what can happen. If you lack self-honesty, this is how far it can go. It can go as far as this, to the point where you could say something like that and at the moment actually believe it. At the moment feel that that's correct. Why? Because if you don't know yourself and you depend on other people to tell you who you are, and you depend on other people to derive your self-value, well if you have the millions clapping and applauding and saying you are this and you are that and compounding the effect of your greatness and your highness, and they start using that terminology with you.

Then, it's just a matter of time before you start feeling, well, maybe they're right. Well, they're most likely right. Well, I've been quite, maybe I am really special. I probably am. Look, how if there is a God, He probably seems to favor me because He's everyone, and just with time, with time, just Shaytan knows what He's doing. Shaytan knows what He's doing. Here, run with this for a while; I'll come back in a few years. Right now, you're nice, and you've convinced yourself of A. Here's B. Let's see if you can convince yourself of B. Come back in a few years. Oh, you've convinced yourself of B too Great Here's C Ah And he comes to a point where someone stands up in front of people and says **انا ربكم الاعلى**.

In that ayah, in that verse, what is the what is Musa told to do **اذهب الى فرعون انه طغى فقل هل لك الى ان تزكى**? You need some tazkih. Oh you don't need no, no, no you just need to stop lying to yourself. You just have to take a step back and just you need to deuce a little bit of self-awareness here. You have to kind of go back. Just think about this for a At the time, you see Firaun eventually, obviously learned the truth or figured it out, but he figured it out and he continued to do what he did and then he kind of gave. up at the time he died. But I tend to feel that when he said those words, he didn't fully believe he was.

Like a big part of him, see here's the interesting piece, is that when you lie to yourself, there's always going to be a part of you that knows it. If you listen to it, you'll hear it. There's a part of you that's always going to be alive, that consciousness, that conscious that you have, it always knows when you're lying to yourself. You just learn to kind of just not listen to it. Just phase out that sound and just cover it up so you don't have to listen to it. But every time we lie to ourselves, there's a piece of us that knows that we're to What we're trying to do here in this whole thing is I'm trying to get you to learn to amplify that voice a little bit more.

Listen to it. Hear it. When it points out that's not true, that's not the way, that's not how things happened. I know you're telling yourself that's how it happened; that's not how it happened. I gave this example a few weeks ago and people laughed, and I want to think

about it again. Every dispute that you have in your life, specifically the disputes that happen between spouses, when you have the dispute and you go and you sulk in a corner somewhere, you're on your way to work or whatever you're doing, you start telling yourself what happened? You start building the story—the story that will allow you to be angry with your spouse so that it's her fault or his fault. You start telling yourself the story.

Now you know on a level that you are full of it. You know, as you're telling yourself the story, that what you're saying is not actually what happened. This is not the truth of what actually occurred. But they can't prove otherwise because they don't see through you, and as long as they can't prove it, then I'm going to claim that it wasn't, and they can't prove it, so they have to believe me. Children do that. Children do that. A 13-year-old: Why did you lie, you fool? After I catch the lie. Why? You know why you lied. Because you thought I couldn't prove it. But once I told you so, I bluff all the time with my kids. I'm like, well, I'm going to go take a look at the camera.

Suddenly, they remember. Suddenly, they're like, oh no, yeah, of course there's no camera. But the moment you say if I'm convincing enough, oh, I just need to look at the cameras, immediately they're like, no, no, I did this first. Okay, all right. So the reason that you're honest is not because you're an honest kid. It's because in your mind it's like, well, as long as you can't prove it, then I'm going to continuously, yeah, yeah. The problem with that? See if there was no God, this wouldn't matter. This would be a waste of everyone's time. Go by all means, lie. Lie and become good at it. Like become really good at it. But because Allah Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la, you can't lie to him. Because there is a camera.

Because there is a camera that is actually recording what's happening on the inside. Forget about if you're caught you're lying, because no one can prove that you did something. We lie because no one can prove that we thought that or we felt that when we did it. No one can prove that I thought that when I did it. So I'm going to lie about it. But the thing is that there is one who can prove that you did that. And if you truly believe that he is watching and that he's going to ask you then just like my 10-year-old when I say yeah, yeah there's a camera, he immediately changes his opinion and tells the truth then maybe we should do the same. Maybe we should stop lying.

But what I'm asking for before we talk about, because I don't think it's actually as important to talk about lying to others, is just at least with yourself, just be honest with yourself. Now you may say, well, if I'm honest with myself but I can't change anything, is there any benefit of doing that? Is there any benefit of being honest with yourself but not changing anything? Absolutely. Absolutely, there is benefit if you are honest with yourself, and you are able to identify all the mistakes, the shortcomings, and the sin. Even if you can't change it, the fact that you know that now puts you in a position of true humbleness in front of Allah, true humility and attitude. This is one of the khutbahs I will be giving over the next number of weeks.

It grants you the proper attitude because you know that you are at fault. So when you come to Allah, you speak to Him with the voice of someone who is at fault. You speak to Him with the tone of someone who knows that they are not doing well. And that will save you. This will absolutely save you on the Day of Even if you couldn't make the changes, even if you tried and kept on failing, you kept on trying to be better, and you kept on failing. But as long as you never lied about it, as long as you continued to say, yes, I am not doing this well, then you come to Allah and say, Ya Rabb, I know, I know I deserve whatever you give me. I deserve all the punishment.

I deserve this because I know what I did. That attitude is extremely valuable and will do wonders for you in this life and on the. It will do wonders for you. Just having that attitude, just knowing that. Ya. That's why all of the examples in the Sunnah, in the Qur'an, of people who were saved. on the Day of Judgment or people who never argued follow them. There's like nine hadiths that are authentic of people who did horrible things and then Allah Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la forgave them somehow. They had the bitaqa of La ilaha illa Allah or something happened and they got forgiven. Every single story has the same premise to it. The person is not in argument, they're not standing there arguing to Allah Subh anaHu Wa Ta A la, but they're just like nope I know I have nothing to, I know what I've done, I know what I accept whatever fate comes to me.

I deserve it. Ya Rabb, I deserve it. I know what I've done. That is very important. That gives you the proper attitude. That's the right attitude to have as a. You have that one, then you're already ahead of the. You're doing well if you can just carry that with you. I'm not, no, I'm not in any position to be on a moral horse, a moral high talking to people. I know what I I know. May Allah forgive me. And then even when you ask for forgiveness, you're asking it with way more sincerity, because you know, you know what you, and you're able to identify the problem that you're in. So there's value to self-honesty, regardless of whether it results in you making life-changing decisions, or even if it does not.

Which takes me to the two pieces. that we're going to start talking about over the next few weeks. The two words that come with al-sidq ma al-nafs, or the self-honesty piece, which is muraqabah and muhasabah. These are two big words in Islamic law and in tazkiyah, and they're very important to kind of understand. Muraqabah is self-observation, and muhasabah is self-accountability, right? And these are the tools that you use to actually make that change. Like, when you start being honest with yourself, then this is what you're going to start putting into motion. You're going to use these tools to try and make some changes. And once you do it once or twice, once you're able to identify a flaw, and you're honest with yourself about that flaw that you see in yourself, and you perform muraqabah of it, and you perform muhasabah of it, then you can start seeing changes.

To start this out, just to give you a little bit of a teaser for next week, what we're going to be doing together is we're going to start looking at you. You have to figure out one piece; you just have to find one flaw that you weren't honest with yourself about before, and now you are. You have to start by finding a flaw, a flaw that you have, or a shortcoming, or a mistake, or something that you do that, before, you were not aware of or you did not acknowledge. or you were not honest with yourself about the severity of it or how bad it is or how long you've been doing it or the fact that it's detrimental.

And you have to find something that these teachings have helped you identify in yourself, and then when you find that one thing, you're going to use it as an example, as a little bit of a way to start learning to do this by performing muraqabah. Muraqabah means that you become observant of yourself regarding this one behavior. You watch for this one behavior. You may lose other things, but you're watching out for this one. So, for example, I'll give you a common one, a simple one: people who lose their temper. There's a lot of We'll talk about that in a different section of this, but if you lose your temper and you didn't really see yourself to be someone like that, you didn't see yourself to be someone who loses their temper or behaves in ways they shouldn't, and you concluded that no, I have a problem.

I tend to say things I shouldn't say or say out of anger or behave out of anger in ways I shouldn't behave. Start being observant of when that occurs to you. Start picking up all of

the times where this is happening so you can start drawing a pattern for yourself of how often that happens. For Shabab, for example. If you have a sin that you want to get rid of, and it's happening frequently, or there's some you have to become observant of, it. You have to start really watching for that sin and seeing how many times it's happening, when it's happening, and what are the circumstances surrounding it. Start defining it a little bit, doing a little bit of muraqabah, meaning you are now just focusing.

There's this rhythm of life with a million things happening. You are basically shading everything out; everything else is just looking for this one behavior, this one thought, this one feeling, just kind of pointing it out here, here, here. And you make a strip. of it and you see okay here's how many times I do it, here's when I do it, here's why, and here you start defining it. And then you start performing a certain degree of. We're going to go into some detail regarding this. I'll give you some practical examples, and we'll do some practical exercises of this. But I want you to start thinking about it because it's important that you start taking some time and reflecting upon it. Start holding yourself accountable. That accountability will either be negative reinforcement or positive reinforcement.

Either it will be that you will deprive yourself of something, or you will offer yourself. Something depending on whether you fall into this problem or you don't. And this is a very well known, it's established in psychology, but I'll tell you how far this goes back. This goes back to Imam Junaid, the third Islamic century, where, when he taught his students how to perform dhikr, for example, this is what he told them to do. This is the method. You would tell them, you would tell yourself, and this is not necessarily regarding self-honesty, but it's just to understand what I mean by negative and positive reinforcement. You tell yourself, we're going to do 100 Salah al Nabi today, salallahu alayhi wa sallam, ijma in. Then your nafs on the inside says it doesn't like it.

You can hear it push back. We're going to do 200. So the nafs says, all right, let's go back to 100, 300. And then the nafs learns to shut up. Then you stop feeling. You do this for a while, and then after a while you say, we're going to do 100, and then no sound, because it knows if it makes any move, it's going to get in. So you start teaching by, but you have to do these things obviously, or else if you say them and don't do them. A parent that is always threatening and never does anything, the kid learns really quickly. The kid learns really quickly who is going to actually see through things and who's not. So if you're not going to see through the threat.

Don't give it not a father specifically, Yanni. The most ridiculous of all threats, Yanni, and mothers as I'm going to skin you. I'm going to throw you out of the You're not going to do any of those things. So don't threaten. Just say what you're actually going to do and then do it. Then the kid actually learns something, and the next time they don't do it again. Empty threats they don't take people anywhere, but this is the method that we're going to do. So what I want you to do for the next week, number one, and this is the most important one: I want you to reflect on who you are, deprived of all of the roles. that you carry all of the hats that you wear, removing all of them.

You in your most raw form sit down and exist as that person. It's very emotional, by the way. It's very, very emotional when you do it. If you do this, it's one of the most emotional things you'll do. If you exist in that raw form of just and nothing else, removing every other connection that you have in your life and just existing, it's an extremely emotional experience and it becomes something that you do all the time. You end up seeing yourself like that all the time, and that's the person that you want wearing the If that person doesn't

exist, if you don't know who that person is then the hats that you're wearing are going to become you, and you're not going to get anywhere with it.

So, this is an extremely, extremely important reflection. I'm going to bring it up every week for the next four or five weeks until we finish this topic. We're going to repeat it to you, remind you of it, and hope that you, inshallah, have something to share regarding trying it because it does come with its baggage, and it does come with its luggage and difficulties. So, it's not something you can easily do. So, let's start with that. Number two: Feedback from people that love you, people that love you who are willing to be honest. with you after you offer them all of the guarantees and all of the that you're not going to get upset by and ask them about how you are to them as a friend or as a sibling or as a colleague or whatever.

And then take that feedback and think about it. And if it bothers you, reflect on why it bothers you. And if it doesn't bother you, then also reflect on why it doesn't bother you, because both of them are a little bit. If you're bothered heavily, then there's a problem. And if you're not bothered at all, there's probably a worse problem. Now you'll come to a point where these things won't bother you, but it doesn't happen at the beginning. If the First time you take feedback and someone says something horrible doesn't bother you, you have a bigger problem than what I can even you're already. You see people as ants, and nothing they say matters to you. And that's not what you're supposed to have.

You come, you end up at the point where it doesn't bother you, but not for that reason, not because you see people to be beneath you, but rather because you have a certain degree of self-honesty that does not allow these criticisms to actually reach your self-value, doesn't touch you, and you just take the benefit from what's being said. So seek that feedback. Seek it until you get something. that, yeah, and it brings out response. Do it and try to find someone who says something really nice and someone who says something that's not. Because even those who say something nice to you think about what that means. What does that do for you? If they say something nice, what does that do? Does that also change your self-view? What does that do for you?

Because it shouldn't either. What people say should not take you in any extreme direction. So seek that out and see how you feel about it. Obviously, choose people who can be honest with you. People who will be honest and appropriate, not someone who's going to just sugarcoat things or be extremely mean just for the sake of being mean. So find someone who actually likes you and And I tell you this is one of the most heartbreaking experiences I had is asking that question. I asked, how do you see me as a? And one of the answers was very, very, until this day it saddens me. Until this day I'm sad about what was. Not because they said it, but because I was so oblivious to the fact that I was like that.

That's what saddened me is how stupid was I and how ignorant had I been that I failed to see that that was my impact on this person. And I didn't even see. I didn't notice. That's what saddened me is that I allowed that to go on for so long. Imagining every moment I've known this person for years, imagining that through all those years being with them, that's how they were feeling. And I didn't pick up, and I didn't feel, and I didn't notice. That's how much I was lying to myself. And then I remember the funny thing is, when people tell you this stuff, you actually go back and you start seeing, oh yeah, there were signs. There were signs; there was evidence, but I just didn't want to listen to it.

I didn't want to hear it because I was happy with kind of believing things being as they were. Which is why the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught in his life people to give that

honest feedback. in both directions. He gave it, and he received it. And he taught people to be able to do it in a way where they didn't lose their relationships with one another. It didn't cause them to not be friends or not to love one another. And that piece is something that I find, in this society at least, has been completely removed from the culture. Completely removed from the culture. Everything has to be sandwiched, you know. The sandwich, whenever I go into the office and they start sandwiching, I'm like no, no, just give me the meat; just keep the bread.

I don't want. What is it? What is it that I didn't do right that I should do right next time? Okay, next. time you have to do it one, two, three not the way you did it; the way you did it was wrong. Halas. Good, good. Next, I know exactly what to do. Instead of they talk to you for 15 minutes and at the end I'm like I'm not even sure what happened here. Like what do I— what exactly? We've lost the ability to be direct. We've lost the ability to actually give direct feedback that's not meant to be mean or disrespectful, but just direct: here's what has to change. Because we all have this problem where we have bruised egos when we attach our self-value to the way that we think people see us or we want to see ourselves, when really that's not supposed to be. should be seeking out that honesty and that clarity. So I'll end with that, inshallah ta ala. We'll go for Salat al Maghrib; after Salat al Maghrib, the brothers are welcome, the younger brothers are welcome to go up front to the classroom with the sisters and to the extension, and I'll do some follow-up, inshallah ta. Yes, you've got a question?

Yeah, you can write down what you think they're going to say; it's not going to be what they're going to say most of the time. So what we're going to run this for next week is the first 10-15 minutes will be follow-up on like for the general group that's attending. We follow up on what we talked about. So I'll offer 15 minutes where it's just questions, or any comments, or things you want to share.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yqg2tPCxYQ0>