

VISITING THE SICK (PART 2 OF 2)

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Description: The reward, etiquette and manners of visiting the sick.

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The rewards for visiting the sick are great in both number and magnitude. The Prophet Muhammad said:

“If a man calls on his sick Muslim brother, it is as if he walks reaping the fruits of Paradise until he sits, and when he sits he is showered in mercy, and if this was in the morning, seventy thousand angels pray for him until the evening, and if this was in the evening, seventy thousand angels pray for him until the morning.” (Al-Tirmidhi)

And he, Heavenly Salutations be upon him, also said:

“Whoever visits a sick person is plunging into mercy until he sits down, and when he sits down he is submerged in it.” (Silsilah Al-Saheehah)

And the Prophet also said:

“Whoever visits a sick person or visits a brother in Islam, a caller cries out to him: ‘May you be happy, may your walking be blessed, and may you occupy a dignified position in Paradise.’”^[1]

Happiness and optimism are Islamic virtues when they spring from trust and hope in God. Likewise sadness and pessimism are sinful when they reflect a state of despair in the Almighty. Therefore, regardless of how bad or “incurable” the illness, the one visiting the sick should encourage him with hope in God, Who has power over all things, including the chronically, even terminally ill.

“Is not He (God) able to give life to the dead?!” (Quran 75:40)

“...And in God should the believers put their trust.” (Quran 3:122)

Besides trying to help the sick forget their pain, suffering, discomfort and hardship – even if only for a short while - the visit should also serve to boost their morale, lift their

spirit and strengthen their resolve. Abdullah b. Abbas, the cousin and Companion of the Prophet, related that when visiting a sick person, God's Messenger would say:

“Be steadfast, may God purify you.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

What's more, the visitor should use the occasion of his visit to remind himself and the one being visited of their total and utter dependence upon God; that it is better to suffer in this life than the Next, and that He, Most High, will reward the believer who is patient and firm when put to in trial.

“...And (righteous are those) who remain patient in times of poverty, sickness and during conflict....” (Quran 2:177)

Tactful speech is advisable during the best of times. The one visiting the sick ought to be especially sensitive and careful with his words when in the presence of the suffering. After all, exacerbating the patient's distress might lead to a worsening of their physical condition. And just because a person may be incapacitated due to their sickness, it does not mean that they forfeit their right to be obeyed in their own house, nor that their privacy go un-respected. The scholar of Islam, Imam Ibn Abdul-Barr, wrote in his book of Islamic jurisprudence, *Al-Kafi*:

“Whether you visit a healthy or an ill person, you ought to sit where you are told. Hosts know better how to ensure privacy in their home. Visiting an ill person is a confirmed Sunnah. The best visit is the shortest. The visitor ought not to sit too long with an ill person, unless they are close friends and the ill person enjoys their company.”

As for the length of the visit, if the visitor is sincere in his intention, once he has achieved the objective of his visit, he would have no reason to burden the sick person with a prolonged stay and unnecessary disturbance. The Syrian scholar, Shaykh Abdul-Fatah Abu Ghuddah, wrote in his book on Islamic manners:

“The length of the visit should not be longer than the time between the two sermons of Friday. In this respect, it was said that the visit should be long enough to convey salaams and wishes, to ask the sick how they are doing, to pray for their recovery and to leave immediately after bidding them farewell.”

The point being that the visitor must show compassion at every moment and opportunity: compassion through the appropriateness of his words, compassion through the correctness of his conduct, and compassion through the brevity of his stay; all in the sure knowledge that doing so would lend him towards God's Compassion, as His Beloved Prophet said:

“Show mercy to those on earth, the One above the heavens will show mercy upon you.”

And from the most compassionate of actions is to emulate the *Sunnah* (inspired practice) of the Prophet Muhammad in visiting the sick. That is because to say and do as he did is the surest way to bring about success in both this life and the Next, for both the visitor and the one being visited. From the many Prophetic narrations that have reached us in this regard is the narration of A'isha, the wife of the Prophet, where she said:

“If someone fell sick, the Prophet would pass his right hand over them while saying the following prayer: ‘O Lord of humanity!, take away the suffering, bring the recovery, there is no cure but Your cure that leaves no illness.’” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

Also, from the practice of the Prophet when visiting the sick was to say:

“No worry. It is a cleansing and purification, if God so wills.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

Let us hope and pray that each and every affliction we experience is a blessing in disguise, a cleansing and purification of both our body and soul from every harm and impurity. And may our visiting others during their sickness bring us and them reward from He Who is Most High. And in God we seek refuge.

Footnotes:

[1]

Al-Tirmidhi.

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