

Does religion improve
our lives? Is religion
relevant today?

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Is religion relevant today to our lives?

Concepts discussed:

1-How does God guides us to His way?

2-Divine books: how authentic are they?

3-God's messengers: what do we learn from them?

4-How does the Qur'an influence our lives?

5-Is there a difference between those who are guided and those who follow their own way? Does prayer, fasting and charity really help us?

6-How can religion be used as a cover up for personal reasons, and how can it turn ugly and violent?

Divine guidance

God who created us will certainly guide His servants, and let them know what is good for them

Divine guidance comes as:

- 1-Divine books
- 2-Human messengers
- 3-Our conscience

Divine Books

- 1-The Torah revealed to Prophet Moses
- 2-The Injeel (Bible) revealed to Prophet Jesus
- 3-The Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad

All three Divine revelations came from the same source: the One and Only God

Muslims believe in the Torah & Bible

“It is He who sent down to you in truth the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before that, as a guide to mankind”

Al-Imran 3: 3 & 4

Muslims also believe in all God’s messengers, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus

The Qur'an safeguards and corrects any mistakes humans introduced into divine revelation

“To you We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety”

Al-Maeda 5: 48

“We have sent down this message, and We will safeguard it”

Al-Hijr 15: 9

How was the Qur'an preserved?

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over 23 years. The Qur'anic verses usually few each day were related by the Prophet to two groups:

1-Scribes who wrote down the verses on material available at the time

2-A group of his companions whose job was to memorize these verses by heart

So the Qur'an was preserved in written and oral forms

The Qur'an came gradually over 23 years

If the Qur'an came all at once it would have been impossible for the Prophet and his companions to recite it, memorize it, understand it, apply its guidelines and teach it to others

The Qur'an also came to answer questions and to solve problems during these 23 years

What is the evidence that the Qur'an is the word of God?

1-Evidence from the Qur'an itself

2-Muhammad was illiterate: he could not read or write: how can he produce such a book?

Evidence of the authenticity of the Qur'an from the Qur'an itself

- 1-There is no contradiction in its verses
- 2-The message is clear and logical
- 3-None of its verses were proven wrong
- 4-No one has been able to produce such a Qur'an because it is not the work of human beings

There is no contradiction in the Qur'an

“Do they not consider the Qur'an? Had it been from a source other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy”

An-Nesa'a 4: 82

“Here is a Book which We have sent to you, full of blessings, that they may reflect on its signs, and that those of understanding may be reminded”

Sa D 38: 29

No one could ever produce such a Qur'an

“Say if the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an they could not produce it, even if they backed up each other with help and support”

Al-Isra'a 17: 88

Human Messengers

God sends humans as messengers to their own people, explaining God's message and applying it in their character and behavior, thus becoming examples for us to follow

As Human beings we need both a Divine message as well as a human messenger to live this message:

“How would you deny faith while the signs of God are being rehearsed to you, and among you lives His messenger”

Al-Imran 3: 101

“We sent each messenger in the tongue of his own people”

Ibrahim 14: 4

Messengers were given the proof to convince their people

Moses was given 9 clear signs

Jesus was given the ability to cure the leper, restore sight to the blind and give life to the dead

Muhammad's miracle is the Qur'an, which is an ever-lasting miracle

“Have you not seen how God sets forth a parable? A goodly word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach to the heavens. It brings forth its fruit at all times by the leave of its Lord, so Allah sets forth parables for mankind in order that they may remember”

Ibrahim 14: 24

Our conscience or the ability to know right from wrong and to know that there is a God

“Who listens to the soul distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its suffering, and makes mankind inheritors of the earth? Can there be another god besides Allah?”

An-Naml 27: 62

“So set your face steadily and truly to the faith; this is God’s handiwork according to how He made mankind; let there be no change in God’s work; that is the sound religion, but most among mankind understand not”

Ar-Rum 30: 30

“When your Lord drew forth from the children of Adam their descendants from their loins and made them bear witness concerning themselves: “Am I not your Lord” They said: “Yes, we bear witness” Lest you should say on the Day of Judgment : “we were not aware of this”

Al-Araf 7: 172

How does the Qur'an influence our lives?

- 1-The Qur'an explains our duty in serving God and living our lives as He has commanded
- 2-The Qur'an reminds us of our accountability to God
- 3-We learn from the Qur'an noble character and proper behavior
- 4-The Qur'an answers questions and solves problems
- 5-The Qur'an guides us and serves as a light that illuminates our way, and fills our hearts with knowledge, understanding, peace and contentment

The Qur'an is a guidance from God

‘Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk among people, be like him who is in the depths of darkness unable to get out? Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing’

Al-An'am 6: 122

“O you who believe be conscious of God and believe in His messenger: He will bestow on you a double portion of His mercy, and provide for you a light by which you shall walk, and He will forgive you, for Allah is often-forgiving, most-merciful”

Al-Hadeed 57: 28

The Qur'an reminds us of our accountability to God

“So admonish with the Qur'an such as fear My warning”

Qa F 50: 45

“O mankind do your duty to your Lord, and fear the coming of a Day when no father can help his son, nor can a son help his father. Indeed, the promise of Allah is true: let not this present life deceive you, nor let the chief deceiver deceive you about Allah”

Luqman 31: 33

The Qur'an teaches us noble character and proper behavior

Apply your faith in your life:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West, but it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love of God, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in pain or suffering and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-conscious”

Al-Baqara 2: 177

Our prayers should help us avoid sin and shameful deeds

“Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to you, and establish regular prayer: for prayer restrains from shameful and wrong deeds. The remembrance of God is greater without doubt, for God knows what you do”

Al-Ankabut 29: 45

Fasting allows us to learn self-restraint and piety

“O you who believe fasting has been ordained on you as it was ordained on those before you that you may learn Taqwa (self-restraint)”

Al-Baqara 2: 183

Charity relieves our souls of greed

“Of their good take alms that you might purify them and sanctify them”

At-Tawba 9: 103

“And spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls. Those saved from the covetousness of their own souls will succeed”

At-Taghabun 64: 16

Patiently persevere despite difficulty and do not give up hope

“Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits of your labor, but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: “To God we belong and to Him is our return”. They are those on whom descend blessings from their Lord, and mercy and they will receive guidance”

Al-Baqara 2: 155-157

Do not give up hope of God's mercy

On the tongue of Prophet Jacob (Israel):

“And never give up hope of God's soothing mercy. Truly no one despairs of God's mercy except those who have no faith”

Yusuf 12: 87

And on the tongue of Prophet Abraham:

“He said: “And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord but such as go astray?””

Al-Hijr 15: 56

Be honest and truthful and do not
cheat others

“O you who believe be conscious of God and be
with those who are true in word and deed”

At-Tawba 9: 119

Be kind, gentle and forgiving

“It is through the mercy of God that you are kind and gentle with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have left you: so pass over their faults, and ask for God’s forgiveness for them, and consult them in your mutual affairs. Then when you have taken a decision put your trust in God, for God loves those who put their trust in Him”

Al-Imran 3: 159

Forgive the mistakes of others

“Let them forgive and overlook. Do they not wish that God should forgive them? For God is often-forgiving, most-merciful”

An-Nur 24: 22

Be just and not wrong others

“O you who believe stand out firmly for justice as witnesses for God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin; and whether it be against rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts of your hearts lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, indeed God is well acquainted with all that you do”

An-Nesa'a 4: 135

Be helpful and supportive and reach out to those who need your help

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(A believer is the brother of another believer. He does not wrong him, nor leave him alone unsupported. Whoever is helping his brother God will help him and guide him)

Bokhari

“It is these who hasten in every good deed and these who are foremost in them”

Al-Mumnoun 23: 61

Educating others and spreading useful information

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The best among you is the person who learns the
Qur'an then teaches it to others)

Bokhari

We cannot hide or conceal useful knowledge or
keep it to ourselves. Prophet Muhammad
(PBUH) said: (Whoever was asked about a
knowledge that he possesses then conceals it will
be punished with a harness of fire in his mouth)

Improve your relations with others and make amends

“The believers are but brothers: so make peace and reconciliation between your two contending brothers and be conscious of God that you may receive His mercy”

Al-Hujerat 49: 10

Do not harbor ill-feelings or suspect
the motives of others, do not spy or
back-bite

“O you who believe avoid suspicion as much as possible, for suspicion in some cases is a sin; spy not on each other; nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother ?No, you would abhor it”

Al-Hujerat 49: 12

Learn from your mistakes, turn to God and seek His forgiveness

“Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for God will change the evil of such persons into good, for God is often-forgiving, most-merciful”

Al-Furqan 25: 70

“If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks God’s forgiveness, he will find God often-forgiving, most-merciful”

An-Nesa’a 4: 110

Do not be arrogant or insolent

“Swell not your cheek (for pride) at others, nor walk in insolence through the earth: for God loves not any arrogant boaster”

Luqman 31: 18

Control your anger and make no hasty decisions

“Those who spend whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain their anger and who pardon others, for God loves those who do good”

Al-Imran 3: 134

The Qur'an answers questions and solves problems

“No question do they bring to you but We reveal to the truth and the best explanation thereof”

Al-Furqan 25: 33

“They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: “In them is great sin and some profit, but the sin is greater than the profit”

Al-Baqara 2: 219

The Qur'an serves as a light that illuminates our way and guide us

“Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst mankind, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out? Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing”

Al-Ana'm 6: 122

This light is that of faith (that fills our heart with peace and contentment) and secure knowledge and proper understanding of our goal in life

Contrasting those who are guided with those who follow their van desires

“Is then one who is on a clear path from his Lord,
no better than one to whom the evil of his
conduct seems pleasing, and such as follow their
own lusts?”

Muhammad 47: 14

Our vain desires can lead us astray

“Do you see such a one as taken for his god his own passion and desire? Could you be a disposer of affairs for him? Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are only like cattle,- No, they are farther astray from the way”

Al-Furqan 25: 43 & 44

It is our choice to seek guidance or
to follow our own desires

“Do you such a one as takes as his god his own
vain desire? Allah has knowing him as such left
him astray”

Al-Jatheya 45: 23

It is our choice to seek guidance or
not, but we then bear the
consequences

“Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent Our signs, but he passed them by: so Satan followed him up, and he went astray> If it had been Our will, We should have elevated him by Our signs, but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires”

Al-Araf 7: 175 & 176

We need God's protection against Satan and his influence

“If a suggestion from Satan assail your mind seek refuge with Allah, for He hears and knows all things. Those who are God-conscious and righteous when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! They can see clearly”

Al-Araf 7: 200 & 201

Satan vowed to tempt and deceive mankind

“I (Satan) will lie in wait for them on Your straight way. Then I will assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left: nor will You find most of them grateful for Your mercy”

Al-Araf 7: 16 & 17

“Satan makes them promises and creates in them false hopes, but Satan’s promises are nothing but deception”

An-Nesa’a 4: 120

God promised to protect His righteous servants

“As for My servants you shall have no authority
over them. Enough is your Lord for a disposer
of affairs”

Al-Isra'a 17: 65

Dogmatic or wrong interpretation of religion can cause problems

Extremists and radicals have a dogmatic narrow point of view. They usually are strict in their interpretation and want to force their opinion on others. If you are not with them, then you are against them and considered an enemy. They resort to violence because of their wrong interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah (tradition of Prophet Muhammad).

Others use religion to justify their personal agenda

Others use religion to inflame emotions and influence others who are vulnerable to their propaganda

All religions teach that human life is sacred and to be protected

Yet some extremists do not value or respect the rights of others who do not share their faith and convictions.

They would not hesitate in killing innocent souls because to them it is war and killing unbelievers is justified

They base their conclusion on wrong interpretation of the Prophet's saying, despite numerous verses in the Qur'an that stresses how important it is to safeguard human life and that killing an innocent soul is a great crime against all humanity

There are extremists in all religions

They share the following characteristics:

- They are rigid and dogmatic and not willing to listen to different view points
- They believe that they are the only ones guided
- They see nothing wrong in resorting to violence
- They associate only with similar minded people

We should stand up against extremists in all religions

- They are wrong and do not represent what God's religion is all about
- They are our enemies and we must fight them
- They do not speak for any religion, rather they distort and corrupt any religion