

How to Keep Away From Pride

By Shaikh Ahmad Kutty

Kibr or false pride is undoubtedly one of the most heinous of all sins, for it is not becoming of man, who is a servant of Allah, to act proudly. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “No one who harbors an iota of pride in his heart can enter Paradise.” Allah has warned those who act proudly of terrible chastisements in the Hereafter.

The opposite of pride is humility. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) acted as a perfect role model of humility for us. Thus, he was never tired of reminding himself that he was a servant of Allah. He said, “I eat like a servant and sit like a servant for I am only a servant (of Allah).” He also said, “Whoever humbles himself for the sake of Allah, Allah will exalt him and enhance his honor and dignity.” It is, therefore, imperative that we develop the attitude of humility.

How do we develop humility? As Imam Aal-Ghazali stated, the only way one who is guilty of pride (kibr) can condition himself to be humble is by using both cognitive and practical resources and using them to acquire the habit of humility.

1. The cognitive steps involve knowing first why you are acting so proudly and then convincing yourself to be against it. For instance, if you are proud because of the wealth you possess, then you should think of what became of those who were wealthy and acted proudly. Think of the terrible fate of Pharaoh, Nimrod, and Qarun. Think of those rich people who never benefited from their riches, rather their riches became a source of doom and gloom for them.

2. You should also remind yourself of your true status as a creature of Allah. You were born of a despicable drop of semen; that was your beginning. As for your end, you will be reduced after death to a rotten corpse eaten by worms and finally disintegrating into the earth. How can anyone who is aware of his true nature act so proudly?

On the other hand, think of the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) who, in spite of being the chosen servant of Allah, was always so humble that he never set himself apart from his people in any way. Thanks to his humility, Allah has exalted his status. As opposed to this, the status of those who acted proudly became diminished in the sight of Allah as well as in the sight of people. People today only remember them with the utmost contempt and derision.

3. To reinforce this concept further, list as many verses and hadiths as you can find that speak about the terrible punishment or fate awaiting those who are proud.

Now, we come to the practical tips to counter pride and learn humility. We cannot break any bad habit unless we acquire the opposite habit. So, if you wish to break the habit of pride, you should do what the humble people do, consistently, until humility becomes second nature to you. This will be easy if you use every opportunity to be humble when you meet people. You should be consistent in this behavior until humility is acquired as a habit, just as you acquired the habit of being proud.