



In The Name Of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

المعهد الإسلامي في تورنتو

Islamic Institute of Toronto

Education for Virtuous Living

# Our New Year Resolutions

By Shaikh Ahmad Kutty

Now, at the threshold of a new Islamic year, we may do well to form some resolutions. They say that all changes in society begin with our thoughts: thoughts which are translated into actions; and actions repeated over time form our character. Building sound character is the route toward betting a better society.

## Managing time

Any attempt to change must begin with managing time. Since time is the essence of life, how we spend time makes all the difference between life lived well, or life wasted.

Imam Shafi said, "**Time is a double-edged sword; if you don't handle it well, it can cut you.**" Allah stresses the importance of time in the Qur'an: "By flight of time, humans are losers except those who cherish faith, and do good works, and exhort one another for truth and exhort one another to practice patience." (Qur'an: 103)

The mu'azzin who calls us to prayer also reminds us of the value of time. One of the members of the Salaf said, "**Pray as if it could be the last prayer of your life.**" Prayer should thus serve as a stark reminder of the reality of life: for no one knows when his date with death will be. It is hidden from us for a reason: Allah wants us to exercise vigilance.

## Priorities

As life is transient and every second of it is flowing into the hereafter, we need to use our time to achieve realistic goals chosen based on priorities. The priorities for those who are conscious of the hereafter differ from those who do not believe in it. The fact, however, is that we often go with the flow around us, oblivious of the fact that we will stand before the Lord for the Final Reckoning.

Our priorities should begin in the morning. We would do well to remind ourselves of the Prophetic motto, "**When the morning comes, don't think you will be alive until evening**";



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and "***Make use of health to complete the tasks you will not be able to do in case you become sick; make use of life to prepare for your death.***"

It is crucial for us to organize our goals based on three priorities: maintaining health, mind and soul. Maintaining proper health requires steps to be physically fit as well as taking preventive measures. In this culture of drug saturation, we depend on solely on medications to take care of our health. Studies after studies show that we would do well to trust the age-old wisdom of prevention and a healthy life-style. This would require self-restraint; watching what we eat, daily walking, curbing stress, developing a spiritual mindset, and giving and receiving love.

As for developing the mind, we can never over emphasise the importance of seeking knowledge. However, since life is short, we need to prioritize our time and focus on gaining that knowledge which is most beneficial. Let the prayer of the Prophet be our guide: "***O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge that profits not, and a heart that feels no reverence for You!***"

Although there is a virtual explosion of knowledge, the door is wide open for misinformation and distortion parading as authentic knowledge. Ibn Sirin said, "***Knowledge of religion is religion; so, be careful of the source.***" In other words, we cannot stress enough the importance of making a distinction between knowledge from authentic sources and that which is not.

As for nurturing the soul, it should occupy the highest priority for us since our spiritual soul is the seat of wisdom, faith, and means of salvation.

When it comes to nurturing the soul, the prescribed religious duties should be the starting point. It is not enough however, to perform them as rituals; we must bring a heart that melts in the hands of religion. Hasan al-Basari said, "***We stand before Allah twice: First, when we stand to pray, and the second, we are called to account for our deeds. If we take care of standing here, our standing before Him in the hereafter will be taken care of.***"

We need to go beyond just performing religious duties to devoting time to doing good deeds. We are reminded that we have opportunities all around us to be charitable, kind and make a difference in the life around us.

This is the best way to welcome the day and focus on achieving meaningful goals.



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## Family

Family is the foundation of society. It is where we prepare ourselves to practice giving and receiving love. A stable family is dependent on spouses treating each other as part of themselves. This recognition that marriage is all about the union of souls is the Quranic foundation of a happy marriage. Giving and sharing love should be reflected in our daily interaction with our spouses, children, and parents. We are to pray, ***“Lord, grant us joy in our spouses and children, and make us role models for those who are God-conscious.”***

## Community

A stable family needs a strong community. A strong community cannot be taken for granted. It requires that each one of us takes personal responsibility to build it. Our responsibility towards the community rests with individuals who fill their own niche. The Prophet said, ***“Let each one of you choose for himself or herself a niche to fill.”*** Building the community is not the responsibility of the chosen few who control the governing board or council, or lead prayers or preach. Rather, it rests with each member of the community. Each one should fulfill their own responsibility by contributing what he can towards the betterment of the community. All of the above require consistency to succeed, which is integral for righteous living. The Prophet - who was undoubtedly the most successful leader in history - stressed this when he said, ***“Allah loves nothing more than our consistency in good works.”*** This is because one’s character is formed through consistent actions.