

## CLASS 5

## SINS TAKEN LIGHTLY IN OUR SOCIETIES

## Harming Neighbours

The status of neighbours and being good to them is clear in Islam.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

*“Worship Allah and join none with Him (in worship); and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, Al-Masakin (the poor), the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess.” (4:36)*

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“Jibril kept recommending treating neighbours with kindness until I thought he would assign a share of inheritance”*. [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

So when they have such great status there are clear warnings for those who do not think twice before causing them harm.

Like the saying of the Messenger of Allah, ﷺ, he said: *“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not harm his neighbor.”* (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī).

A more stern warning is given in another hadeeth where the Prophet ﷺ said, *“By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer.”* It was asked, *“Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?”* He said, *“One whose neighbour does not feel safe from his evil”*. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Another narration of Muslim is: Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“He will not enter Jannah whose neighbour is not secure from his wrongful conduct”*.

There are glad tidings to those who are good to the neighbors, the Prophet ﷺ said: *“The best of companions with Allaah is the one who is best to his companion, and the best of neighbours with Him is the one who is best to his neighbour.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari)

## Shaking hands with a non-mahram woman

This is one of the cases where incorrect social customs have taken precedence over the laws of Allaah, to such an extent that if you try to talk to people and show them evidence that this is wrong, they will accuse you of being backward, having a complex, trying to break family ties, doubting their good intentions, etc. Shaking hands with female cousins, brothers’ wives and uncles’ wives is now easier than drinking water in our society, but if we look properly we will understand the seriousness of the matter.

The Prophet ﷺ said: *"If one of you were to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle it would be better for him than touching a woman whom he is not permitted to touch."* (Reported by al-Tabaraani). There is no doubt that this is an act of zinaa, because the Prophet ﷺ said: *"The eyes may commit zinaa, the hands may commit zinaa, the feet may commit zinaa and the private parts may commit zinaa."* (Reported by Imaam).

For those who say it depends on the intentions, we ask them are they better than or is there anyone more pure in heart than Muhammad ﷺ? Yet still he said, *"I do not shake hands with women."* (Reported by Imaam Ahmad). And he said, *"I do not touch the hands of women."* (Reported by al-Tabaraani).

Also 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: *"No, by Allaah, the hand of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ never touched the hand of a (non-mahram) woman. He received bay'ah (pledge of allegiance) from them by word only."* (Reported by Muslim, 3/489). Let them fear Allaah, those people who threaten their pious wives with divorce if they do not shake hands with their brothers.

We should also note that placing a barrier such as a piece of cloth is of no use; it is still haraam to shake hands with a non-mahram woman.

### Deliberately looking at a non-mahram woman

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and to protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allaah is All-Aware of what they do."* (al-Noor 24:30)

The Prophet ﷺ said: *"The adultery of the eyes is by looking" (i.e. by looking at what Allaah has forbidden).* (Reported by al-Bukhaari). Looking for a legitimate purpose is exempted from this rule, such as looking at a woman for marriage purposes, or a doctor examining a patient for medical reasons, etc.

Women are equally forbidden to look at non-mahram men, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and to protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) . . ."* (al-Noor 24:31)

One of the ways in which Shaytaan deceives people is by making them think that there is nothing wrong with looking at pictures in magazines or watching movies, because what is seen is not "real," even though such images clearly cause so much damage by provoking desires.

## Sinning Openly and telling friends about it

Speaking about your sin and flaunting it openly in front of your friends is haraam, and is a major sin. It is one of the ways of spreading immorality among the Muslims, encouraging evil and tempting others to do similar things. It also means that one does not take sin seriously and regards it as insignificant, and that the sinner is damaging his own reputation and exposing his honour to the slander of others. Islam seeks to put people off from doing such things in the strongest possible terms, as in the following hadeeth:

Abu Hurayrah said: I heard the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ say: *“All of my ummah will be forgiven except those who sin openly. It is a part of sinning openly when a man does something at night, then the following morning when Allaah has concealed his sin, he says, ‘O So and so, I did such and such last night,’ when all night his Lord has concealed him and the next morning he uncovers what Allaah had concealed.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5721; Muslim, 2990).

## Spying, Seeking Faults, Spreading Gossip and Slandering

The Muslim has to guard his tongue and avoid things that have been forbidden. Among these forbidden things which people often take lightly are gheebah (backbiting), buhtan (slander) and nameemah (malicious gossip).

Gheebah or backbiting means speaking about a Muslim in his absence and saying things that he would not like to have spread around or mentioned. Buhtan or slander means saying things about a Muslim that are not true, or in other words telling lies about him. Nameemah or malicious gossip means telling one person what another said in order to cause trouble between them.

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): *“neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, Most Merciful”* [49:12]

The Prophet ﷺ said:

- *‘Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the falsest of speech. Do not eavesdrop; do not spy on one another; do not envy one another; do not forsake one another; do not hate one another. Be, O slaves of Allaah, brothers.’* (Al-Bukhaari, 5144; Muslim, 2563)
- *‘O you who have spoken the words of faith but faith has not truly entered your hearts! Do not backbite about the Muslims, and do not seek out their faults. For whoever seeks out their faults, Allaah will seek out his faults, and if Allaah seeks out a person’s faults He will expose him even in his own house.’* (Ahmad & Abu Dawood, Classed as saheeh by al-Albaan).
- *“Whoever has wronged his brother with regard to his honour or anything else, let him seek his forgiveness today, before there will be no dinar and no dirham, and if he has any good deeds to his credit they will be taken from him in a manner commensurate with the wrong he did, and if he has no good deeds, then some of his counterpart’s bad deeds will be taken and added to his burden.”* [al-Bukhaari].

No believer would read these great ahaadeeth and then spy on his fellow-Muslims, or seek out their faults, or spread malicious gossip among them. Note that the scholars have listed spreading Malicious Gossip or Slandering a Muslim amongst Major Sins.

It was reported that Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *“When I was taken up into the heavens (the M’iraj), I passed by some people who had nails of copper with which they were scratching their faces and chests. I said, ‘Who are these people, O Jibreel?’ He said, ‘These are the ones who used to eat the flesh of the people and slander their honour.’”* [ al-Bukhaari, Abu Dawood].

With regard to the meaning of gheebah (backbiting), it was reported from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *“Do you know what gheebah is?” They said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said, “(It is) when you mention something about your brother that he does not like.” It was said, What do you think if what I say about my brother is true? He said, “If it is true then you are backbiting against him and if it is not true then you are slandering him.”* [Muslim, al-Tirmidhi].

Gheebah means mentioning something about your brother in his absence and saying something that he does not like to have said about him, with the intention of mocking him or making fun of him. But if you say something about him in his absence to someone who can offer him advice so that he will advise him, or you are asking for help from someone who you hope will have an influence on him so that he will stop doing some evil action or sin that he has fallen into, and thus bring him back to the straight path – this is not gheebah. For example, if a wife talks to her husband or her son about another of her sons so that he can advise him, this is not gheebah.

Similarly, if you speak about your brother or someone else to his guardian or to someone who is able to stop him from doing wrong – with the intention of voicing a grievance and asking for help, or because he has taken something from you unlawfully and you want to demand your rights from the guardian of the one who took what is rightfully yours, such as when a man complains about his brother to his father if he has mistreated him or taken something that belongs to him, in order to have his rights restored to him, or complaining to a ruler or judge of unfair treatment – this is not gheebah.

But if there is no useful purpose to be served by speaking about a person, or if the aim is to make fun of him or expose him, this is gheebah and is not permitted.

Everyone who does any kind of backbiting, slander or malicious gossip has to repent and pray for forgiveness, and that is between him and Allaah. If he knows that any of his words reached the person about whom he was speaking, then he should go to him and ask him to forgive him. But if he does not know, then he should not tell him; rather he should pray for forgiveness for him and make du’a (supplication) for him, and speak well of him in his absence just as he spoke against him. Similarly, if he knows that telling him will provoke more enmity, then it is sufficient to make du’a for him, speak well of him and pray for forgiveness for him.

## Bearing false witness

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *“. . . So shun the abomination (worship) of idols, and shun lying speech (false statements) - hunafaa' Lillah (i.e., to worship none but Allaah), not associating partners (in worship, etc.) unto Him . . .”* (al-Hajj 22:30-31)

'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Abi Bakrah (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father) reported that his father said: “We were with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ when he said: *‘I fear for you three major sins’ - three times: ‘associating partners with Allaah, disobedience to parents, and -’ - he was reclining but he sat up at this point and said: ‘ - and bearing false witness.’ He kept repeating this with such fervour that we wished he would stop (for his own sake).*” (Reported by al-Bukhaari).

The warning against bearing false witness was uttered repeatedly because people take it too lightly and there are many motives for doing so, such as hatred and envy or sometimes its just because one of the people involved is our friend and we want to support him/her. The resulting corruption is great indeed: how many people have lost their rights because of false witness! How many innocent people have been treated unjustly, and how many people have gained what they did not deserve, because of it!

## Abandoning a Muslim brother for more than three days with no legitimate reason

It is not permissible to forsake a Muslim, because the Prophet ﷺ said: *“It is not permissible for a man to forsake his Muslim brother for more than three days, each of them turning away from the other when they meet. The better of them is the one who gives the greeting of salaam first.”* (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5727; Muslim, 2560). This applies especially if the believer is a relative, such as a brother, nephew, uncle or cousin, because in such cases forsaking is an even worse sin.

This applies unless the person is committing a sin and there is an interest to be served by forsaking him, i.e., that it will make him give up the sin. In that case there is nothing wrong with it, because this comes under the heading of removing evil. The Prophet ﷺ said: *“Whoever among you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand [by taking action]; if he cannot, then with his tongue [by speaking out]; if he cannot then with his heart [by hating it and feeling that it is wrong], and that is the weakest of faith.”* (Narrated by Muslim, 49).

According to a Fatwa of Sheikh Ibn 'Uthaymeen, The basic principle is that it is haraam for a Muslim to forsake his fellow-Muslim, unless there is a reason to allow it.

What you should do, if your brother has done something haraam, is to advise him and explain that this thing is haraam and is not permitted, and remind him of Allaah. If you see that he is persisting in his sin and you think that forsaking him will serve a purpose, then it is permissible to do so, as stated above.

The Muslim must be forbearing and sincere towards his brothers, he must be tolerant towards them and overlook their mistakes. He should not hasten to adopt a solution that may cause division and haraam kinds of forsaking. May Allaah help us all to do that which He loves and which pleases Him. May Allaah send blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.