**WMWT4**

**Giving and taking opinions in an organization**



O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allah ; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.(Maida:54)



So whatever thing you have been given - it is but [for] enjoyment of the worldly life. But what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who have believed and upon their Lord rely. (Shuara:36)



And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive, (Shuara:37)



And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend. (Shuara:38)

This session is about voicing your concern or opinion in an organization. You have a concern or an opinion that you’d like to give about something. What are the guidelines that we have to follow when we give our opinion? What are the ethics of giving our opinion?

The first of the verses I would like to share with you in relation to this are from Sura Maida, ***‘Those who have iman if anyone goes back on their religion Allah will replace them and Allah will bring another nation He will love them and they will love him. They will be extremely humble to the believers and severe against the disbelievers.’*** (42:54)

So before we give our opinion we must know what it means to be humble in our interaction with other believers. The Arabic word for humility comes from the word zulala. Zulala is what you walk over, for example a rug. So we have to let other believers walk over us. In other words we have to be extremely humble in our interactions with other believers but extremely tough with the enemy. Understand the context of this sura; victory of Islam has just happened. Makkah has just been conquered. We have to be tough with the Kafireen. Because they are working all out to stamp out the new Islamic state. That’s the attitude. But then Allah adds in relation to the topic of giving your opinion; ***‘They struggle for the sake of Allah and they don’t fear the blame of anyone who casts blame.’***

Please listen carefully. It says, ***‘They don’t fear the blame of anyone who blames them.’*** That is the criticism of anyone who criticizes them when they voice their opinion. They don’t look around and say, ‘What are people going to say if I say this? It’s in my conscious. I can’t sit on it. I feel like it’s wrong and I should say something but everybody around me is going to think I am weirdo or I’m a trouble maker or I’m causing problems so I should just stay quiet.’ No you shouldn’t just stay quiet. This peer pressure thing this is against the ethics in an organization. This is because organizations tend to develop momentum once they start going in a direction and they go full steam ahead. At that time you and your good conscious realize that there is something wrong with this direction but you don’t voice your opinion because everybody is too excited about continuing to go. Maybe it’s not the best direction but the train’s already left the station so to say. You should and you have to voice your concern no matter what other people say. You have to be courageous about voicing your opinion, but you don’t have to be a punk about it either.

You don’t have to make trouble at a meeting by saying things like, ‘What we are doing is hypocrisy.’ There are respectful ways of voicing your opinion. There are decent ways like saying, ‘Look I am not too comfortable with this, I don’t mean to be trouble and I don’t want to be offensive but how can we justify this.’ This doesn’t seem right to me.’ So at the very least you voice your concern in a decent way.

The other thing is that voicing your opinion is not just about something that is wrong but it can be a suggestion for improvement. You have a suggestion for betterment. You have a strategic suggestion. You should never be afraid of giving those kinds of suggestions but here’s the thing that could save you or destroy you. If you don’t remember it, it will destroy you. **And that is giving a sincere suggestion for the sake of Allah is an act of worship.** Giving a suggestion is just like giving sadaka or charity. Sadaka should only be for Allah. Likewise advice should only be for Allah. If you expect returns in dunya (this world) from sadaka then Allah does not count your sadaka. If you expect that your opinion should be taken, that is that they must act upon it and if they don’t you get offended, in that case you did not give that opinion for the sake of Allah. You gave it for the sake of getting it followed. Then you gave that opinion for yourself. As stated above giving your opinion is an act of worship. A good way of understanding the method of giving your opinion is through salat (prayers). In the salaat, let’s say that the imam forgot that Zuhr is 4 rakaat. Shaytan got to him and he got up for the 5th rakaat. You’re standing behind. What do you do? You give your opinion. How do you give your opinion? You say, ‘Subhan Allah’. But let’s suppose the imam still stands up and makes the full fifth rakat. What do you do then? You don’t do what you think is right, but you keep quiet and follow along. Why? Because the discipline of the group is more important then you being right individually. Your responsibility was completed the moment you voiced your concern. If you courageously voiced your concern then the onus for things going wrong are not on your shoulders, it’s on the leadership. You did your part.

We should make the following dua every time we give our opinion, ‘Ya Allah, I gave given this opinion for your sake please accept as an act of worship for you.’

By the way if we truly have our intentions right then instead of being offended, we should be terribly afraid if our opinion is taken. Because if our opinion is taken then the entire responsibility falls on us. It went from the leadership’s opinion to my opinion. If something goes wrong I will be asked about it because that was my suggestion.

So think a hundred times before you give a suggestion and give a sincere suggestion. Ask Allah for guidance when you do make a suggestion and do not be offended when it is not taken. It’s not the end of the world. It’s not like kufr and imaan. Like your opinion was iman and everything else was kufr. Absolute authority belongs only to Allah. Not to the khateeb, not to the scholars whoever they maybe, not to organizations, not to anybody but Allah. So don’t be afraid to give your opinion but don’t be hung up on your opinion. Don’t say, ‘They didn’t listen to me.’ That’s actually what the hypocrites said. ‘Do we have any authority?’ That is that, nobody listens to us, nobody takes what we say seriously. That’s what they said because they were offended that their opinion was not taken at Uhud. They were offended by that. So we should not have that kind of an attitude. That’s the first important point.

The second is from a long passage from Sura Shura. Allah says, ***‘Whatever you have been given is mataa provisions to enjoy in this life but whatever Allah has is better for those who truly believe. And they place their complete trust in Allah.***’ (42:36)

The passage begins with Tawakkul, reliance or dependence on Allah. Then moves unto another theme.

***‘Those who stay away from major sins and all forms of vulgarity… .’ (42:37)***  If your opinion is going to be worth something then you have to be worth something before Allah. And we as workers of Islam (because this passage is about Shura) first of all we have to get away from major sins. We talked about this in the first session about balancing the individual worship with our volunteering activities. Now we have to make sure that at least we shouldn’t be engrossed in major sins and the one we should look out for in particular is Al Fawahish or vulgarity. This means all forms of shamelessness, vulgarity or obscenity. That is the one that will get us because shamelessness is from the Kabaair or the major sins, but Allah pulled it out and mentioned it separately so he said kabaair wal fawaahish (the big sins and vulgarity). Even through fawahish is part of al kabaair. So we should avoid all forms of shamelessness.

So especially the young guys and young girls when you are volunteering at the MSA-YC-YM have to watch out for vulgarity because you are volunteering for something that’s remotely related to Islam Shaytaan will try to destroy you through this. So we have comments like, ‘No no, no, we are just sitting in meeting we are taking Shura.’ That’s not Shura. That’s something else with and ‘sha’ and a ‘taa’ but it isn’t Shura. That’s what you think it is. So you have to guard yourself extra when you do Islamic work because, it the easiest way Shaytaan can get you. He will bombard you with it too. Guys you may grow a beard and you think it’s a safeguard against girls on campus but shaytaan will do waswasa to that girl and she’ll come up to you and say, ‘By the way I am in your bio class.’ And you will be saying, ‘Humm, yeah I am in the YC or MSA and I am the president.’ It will happen. Shaytaan will mess with you. He will try to ruin you, and now you will be going to the convention for who knows what reason. You are a attending the meetings extra early and you are all dressed up and perfumed for everyone of them for God knows what reason. It happens. And this happens to boys and girls. So beware of Shaytan's snare.

And the next point in the verse is, ***‘And whenever they get angry, they calm themselves down they control themselves.’*** (42:37) What is the most difficult urge or feeling to control for young people? It’s the tendency towards the opposite gender. If you can control that, then the next big problem is what? Your temper. Somebody says something you don’t like. Tempers flare but immediately Allah mentions that if you can control fawahish then you will not only be able to control your anger but you’ll also be able to forgive. And that’s the key to successful Islamic work. You have to work with others and that will often raise your blood pressure. Sorry but that comes with the work. It doesn’t matter whether you’re working at a masjid or a school. It doesn’t matter what voluntary work you are doing you will be around people that will get on your nerves and they will crawl under your skin and some will make your blood boil and they will make you want say something so badly. But when that urge comes you just recite, ‘***Whenever they get mad, they forgive.’ (42:37)*** It’s not even that whenever they get mad they calm down. The words of Allah are, **‘THEY FORGIVE.’** They move on. They learn to grow a thick skin. People who are going to work for Islam if they don’t have a thick skin they’d better grow one and be mentally prepared to be offended a lot. That comes with the territory. This also true for other areas of life like in families and at the workplace.

You know how many people join an organization with good intention and at the start are given congratulations and hugs but a few months down the line they hear something they did not want to hear and they get offended and say, ‘I am never going back there again.’ You ask, ‘Why?’ The reply is, ‘You don’t know what they said to me?’ What that guy said to you was your test of whether you get angry or not. This is because Allah’s work is more important than your anger; you pride. If you were doing good work in that organization, you go back there and do it. I am not saying you let people walk all over you, you should stand up for yourself, but you don’t insult anybody and you overlook their misgivings. You know sometimes people and most Pakistani’s are good at giving taanas or sarcastic remarks; things which burn the others from inside. In over culture we just have to do it with our children and others. For example when the wife makes a good meal you say, ‘Aaj to bara acha khana banay, aaj kia bukhaar thaa?’ i.e, ‘Today it’s a good meal are you feeling ok, because normally it’s pathetic.’ We cannot say, ‘It’s good or nice.’ We just cannot do it. It’s not in our blood to praise others, especially the wife.

In terms of volunteering you have to make a face and you bring that into the meeting. You bring it into the Islamic work too. You have to say these comments and remarks and they add up till the person goes crazy. They keep building up till the kettle overflows.

But you on the receiving end should learn to take it and grow a thick skin and learn to laugh it off. Learn to hear obscene and offensive things and just laugh them off and let them go. That’s the way you will be able to continue your work. And those people who test your patience they are a blessing because Allah teaches you sabr or patience through them. Otherwise you may not learn sabr. So at the ceremony at the end of the year you should say, ‘I thank those who helped me and I thank those who made me a more patient and elevated human being.’ People that are going to be a challenge in your life are a blessing in disguise because otherwise you may not learn sabr. Sabr would just be a theory. What is sabr if it is not tested? And sometimes it’s tested by those who are close to us and those who work with us.

Finally the verse says, ‘***Those who have responded to their master (the call of Allah) (and they did not forget their individual responsibility) they establish salaat (and finally) and their decisions are essentially consultation among them.’*** (42:38) He did not even say that they are based on consultation, it says, they are consultation. All their decisions are consultation.

Consultation is not an empty suggestion box which says put your suggestions here and there is a shredder at the bottom. Or, ‘Brother if you have a concern, say it in the mike.’ The brother says, ‘I think we should have a youth program.’ ‘Next.’ I think we should have a women’s programme .‘ ‘Jazakallah Jazakallah Jazakallah, Jazakallah, move on.’

That’s nor shura brothers. Shura isn’t just to let people blow their hot air and say, ‘Jazakallah’, and do whatever you are going to do. That’s not shura. So what is shura?

Shura is to take sincere opinions seriously into consideration. You don’t have your mind made before you go to a shura meeting. Then it’s not called a shura meeting. If you have your mind made up already, then any opinion that comes to you, you are just going knock it out of the park a for six. You are just there to state and defend your opinion. That’s not shura. Shura means you are open to other ideas and that you haven’t yet made up your mind. And you are going to exchange thoughts and you are open to the idea that may be what you had in mind isn’t the best and what the others offer maybe better or a combination of the two can be worked out.

You have to go to shura with a shura attitude and that’s when shura is shura. That’s when it really counts for something. Now if you do give a suggestion and it’s serious and I am not talking about things like colour of the carpet, I’m talking about serious stuff like who should be eligible for sadaqa or who should be the next school principal or something big, and you think there is a serious problem with the decision of the committee then what should you do? Well you do not discuss it with fellow volunteers. You discuss it with someone above you. You discuss it with the Ameer but you don’t discuss it with anybody else because if you do that’s not shura that’s najwa (secret discussions) and we will talk about that in the next session. If the ameer does not take it seriously you take it to somebody above him. If nothing happens there as well, then you bring it up one final time in front of everybody and say, ‘I have brought this suggestion up a number of occasions and this is the last time I’m bringing it up. I will not bring it up again. Here are my concerns…and they haven’t been met.’ And if you think it’s a life and death issue, then that’s your last draw. You say it publicly, ‘This is my concern and in good faith I cannot continue to work in this organization, (if this is the case) I will not bring it up again.’

What was the channel? First you bring it up to the one above, then one above that, then in front of everyone and you are done. Don’t email anybody about it. No going back and forth. No discussions after the meeting. It’s finished. It is dead. And as you are leaving the organization if that is unfortunately the case make dua for the organization, ‘May Allah bless this effort, May Allah unite us may Allah forgive my and your shortcomings.’ Leave on a good note. Don’t leave like it was wrestling match. Don’t walk away angry. These are your brothers. You want see them in Jannah. You are all here for the same reason. Nobody is getting a pay cheque. Everybody’s a volunteer. If there’s anger in the meetings it’s because shaytan is there. He’s your enemy not each other. Remember Islamic workers are not enemies of each other. Shaytan is your common enemy. Realize that and don’t be fooled by him.

The next part of the verse says, ‘***Tell my slaves, say the better thing.’ (ref?)*** In your mind before you open your mouth there should be a multiple choice questionnaire. ‘I’m about to say, ‘What he said is wrong and I could say it, this way, ‘That guy is wrong or talking rubbish,’ or I could say it this way, ‘I don’t think I agree with that.’ Maybe I should choose the second way.’ Think through what you are going to say. And if you don’t do that, it is that guaranteed Shaytan will cause dissent among you. No doubt about it. So think and rethink not only what you are going to say but how you are going to say it. That’s Shura; healthy Shura.

Be respectable, be courteous but don’t respect people just to pander to them. Don’t do ingenuine or false praises. Like, ‘Jazakallah you are doing so much for our community but I have a suggestion.’ Don’t do that if it’s not genuine. Don’t butter him up first? Then tell him how bad he is. If it’s not from the heart don’t say it. It’s better you are quiet.

So these are the basics of taking and giving of opinions in organizations. Barak Allah -----

The next session is about najwa or secret meetings or discussions.