

## **Self-Knowledge and Setting Priorities**

### **Fulfilling the Purpose of Creation**

#### **Why Is It Important to Know the Relationship between Self-Knowledge and Setting Priorities?**

We all know that our lives differ from one another due to our type of insight, self-knowledge and setting priorities in various areas of life. One is materialistic; one focuses on his physical appearance; another person is interested in education and knowledge, etc. However, we may not have considered the basis on which we set our priorities in life. Does our self-knowledge play a role in categorizing these priorities correctly? Or do we see a connection between self-knowledge and setting priorities in life?

We usually set our life priorities based on our love and affection for different things. This love becomes the driving force in our lives. But the question is, why is this love prioritized over others? What is the criterion for its prioritization? Or what is the highest form of love, and what is the best prioritization based on? It is clear that doing the right prioritization in the mathematical system of creation is possible, but it has certain rules and conditions that we intend to address in this lesson. In fact, by understanding the relationship between self-knowledge and setting priorities, we want to answer many of the above questions.

## **Respecting Priorities**

You must have dealt with people who fail to determine their priorities effectively. Such people spend the time they should devote to their family on their work, education, and social status. They may hinder their child's independence by providing excessive support. When they need to provide emotional support to their spouse, they are indifferent towards her, and when their spouse needs some alone time, they fail to give her necessary space. With a more general look, we realize that these priorities also extend to a broader scope. In fact, our whole life is overshadowed by priorities with which we consciously or unconsciously adjust all our thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and decisions.

Most of us usually have a prevailing issue in life that overshadows and influences our other decisions. For example, if we prioritize luxury, wealth, and inanimate perfections in general, this priority affects our choices in career, marriage, field of study, and even our place of residence. Similarly, someone who prioritizes intellectual perfections may impose many hardships on himself or his family to acquire a higher level of intellectual perfections. Likewise, if we prioritize vegetative or animal perfections, they overshadow our lives and direct our decisions accordingly. While we may superficially believe that we have a successful life or that everything is going well, as long as our life priorities are not in harmony with our existential structure, we do not move towards human perfection and the purpose of our creation. Just like a driver who thinks he is going in the right direction, but in reality, the more he drives, the farther he strays from his destination.

## **Self-Knowledge and Setting Priorities: A Mutual Relationship**

No matter how sensitive or careful we are in choosing our life priorities, we will not reach our destination unless we know the basis on which these priorities must be set, who we are at our core, and the qualities that define us. Suppose we go to the most skilled dressmaker in the city to have a dress sewed. Until we specify for whom the dress is being made, what size it must be, and for what occasion it will be worn, we will not get the desired dress. So in order to accurately determine our priorities in life, we first need to know ourselves. Until we know the structure and dimensions of our existence, we cannot determine the priorities for reaching our destination. In other words, we will be unable to understand the relationship between self-knowledge and setting priorities.

As we discussed in the previous lessons, our soul, like the whole world, is made up of a mathematical structure. However, the problem is that due to our limited intellect, we are neither properly aware of the structure of our existence, nor can we correctly recognize the priority of our needs. Without knowing ourselves, we just keep drifting from one perfection to another. The only person who can help and save us from this confusion is someone who is not only aware of all the dimensions of our existence, but also knows how we must act to reach the destination and purpose of our creation. He can help us to understand how to set our priorities in life to avoid harm, confusion, and loss. The relationship between self-knowledge and setting priorities in the hierarchy of love is a two-way relationship. We will encounter difficulties if we know ourselves but we are unable to prioritize our beloveds. Similarly, if we set priorities without self-knowledge, we will not achieve the purpose of our creation. In fact, we can move toward our

human perfection when we set our priorities and hierarchy of love based on our true self; this means a correct understanding of the relationship between self-knowledge and setting priorities in life.

### **How Does Self-Knowledge Adjust our Priorities?**

As we realized in the self-knowledge section, what makes us different from other beings is our human or supra-rational dimension. That is, no matter how successful we may be in other dimensions, we are not a human until we prioritize our supra-rational dimension. In fact, in order to achieve human balance, we need to align all the levels of our existence with our supra-rational dimension. Besides, in order to achieve human perfection, the purpose of creation, and closeness to God, we must adjust our life priorities based on this human dimension and our true self.

Our goal is to connect with Allah and become similar to Him. However, to achieve this similarity, we must first know our human dimension, that is, the only dimension that has the potential to connect with infinity and attain similarity to Allah. But the path of similarity and closeness to Allah does not end here. We need a perfect role model who is the mirror held up to the names of Allah, capable of reflecting His names and attributes fully and comprehensively.

Consider telling a child to be kind or forgiving! He needs to see those things in action to understand what they mean. Just by watching us be kind or forgiving, kids can learn how to do so. On a larger scale, it is the same for all of us. A perfect human being is the flawless role model that we need to get similar to Allah. In fact, if we do not know ourselves, neither do we recognize the necessity of becoming like Allah, nor do we feel the necessity of having a role model to become similar to Him.

Without self-knowledge, we make no effort to reach Absolute Perfection, and this means moving away from the purpose that God has intended for our creation.

So in order to properly arrange our hierarchy of love and set the right priorities in life, we must prioritize Allah, the Household of Prophet Muhammad, and *jihad* (striving) in the way of God at the top of our priorities and beloveds.<sup>1</sup> This is not possible without self-knowledge. As a result, self-knowledge and setting priorities and adjusting the hierarchy of love are all essential for fulfilling the purpose of our creation. In other words, without self-knowledge and setting priorities, we cannot be like Allah or Absolute Perfection.

In this lesson, we examined the relationship between self-knowledge and setting priorities and the effect of these two on achieving the purpose of our creation. We stated that without self-knowledge, it is not possible to set priorities and regulate our hierarchy of love. On the other hand, self-knowledge alone, without regulating the love hierarchy or prioritizing our beloveds, does not lead us to the purpose of our creation. In order to become like Allah, we need to focus on both self-knowledge and prioritization simultaneously.

Have you ever thought that it is not possible to achieve the purpose of creation without self-knowledge and setting priorities or adjusting our hierarchy of love? we invite you to share your opinions with us about the topics we have discussed.

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<sup>1</sup>. Holy Quran, 9: 24