

Presence of Heart

How to Maintain It in All Situations

The Concept of the Presence of Heart and the Necessity of Acquiring It at All Times

What do you know about the concept of the presence of heart¹ and the necessity of acquiring it?

Is the presence of heart only recommended during acts of worship?

Many of us believe that the presence of heart is only relevant during prayers and religious activities, and that it is not necessary at other times. Although we often lack focus and concentration during our prayers, only being present in the first moment before our minds wander, the presence of heart is not limited to prayers and worship. It means having an inner and heartfelt attention to God and realizing that we are always in His presence, so that we find Him our partner and enjoy supplicating and communicating with Him.

You may have heard the famous poem by Baba Tahir that says, “Blessed are those who are always in prayer...” Do you think the poet meant that we should be praying all day long? Certainly not! The intention is that we should remember God at all times and feel His presence in our hearts because, as we learned in previous lessons, a sound heart is one that maintains a constant connection with the Unseen realm (*Ghayb*). Our hearts should always be present with Allah, its True Beloved,

¹ *hudhoor al-qalb*

and never forget or become heedless of Him. It does not matter what we are doing, even if we are engaged in ordinary tasks like studying, cooking, or traveling; what matters is that we should feel in our heart that we are present with our Beloved. Otherwise, those tasks become a veil and a barrier, preventing us from having an intimate and loving connection with the Unseen realm.

What can we do to ensure that God's presence in our hearts and souls is strong and permanent, and does not diminish with every occurrence? What are the effects and benefits of this presence in our lives?

We will discuss two practical strategies for maintaining the presence of heart in various situations, as well as the effects and benefits of this presence.

Knowing and Nourishing the Human Dimension

The first effective strategy for maintaining the presence of heart throughout the day is to know and nourish the human dimension of our existence. The essence of a sound heart is the constant remembrance and presence of the Beloved in the heart because our heart is the Divine Breath that only finds peace with its True Deity and Beloved. Until we recognize this dimension, it will not be possible to nurture it. In fact, realizing that we are human beings and have no beloved other than the One God is the first step toward acquiring the presence of heart. Once this understanding is achieved, the next step is nourishment and protection. At this stage, just as a mother is never deterred from feeding and caring for her beloved child, we too must not neglect nourishing and caring for our precious soul child, providing it with the appropriate sustenance, which is acquaintance and solitude with God.

We previously mentioned that the management and governance of the lower dimensions of our existence must always be under the control of our human dimension or heart. If this relationship is reversed and the lower dimensions govern our existence, the remembrance of God will no longer bring us joy, which is very dangerous. If the Quran, which is the word of our Beloved, does not delight and immerse us in pleasure; if we cannot enjoy visiting the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Peace Be Upon Them), who are our true family and roots; if we have not established any loving or friendly relationship with them; if being in gatherings of *dhikr* (remembrance of God) bothers us and we seek only temporary and animalistic pleasures, the lower and animal dimensions of our existence are governing us. Let us remember that if we constantly focus on nourishing the inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intellectual dimensions of our existence, while neglecting our heart, the life of our heart will be endangered, and it will gradually die. In this case, our lives will be filled with wrong decisions and relationships. Even with the highest degrees of knowledge, abundant wealth, a successful marriage, or any other illusory success, we will still be vulnerable and unable to cope with sadness, anxiety, and negative thoughts.

Seeking Help from Mental Imagery and Practice

Another effective strategy for maintaining the presence of heart is to utilize the power of mental imagery and practice. In moving toward eternity, we need to acquire a sound heart, and to reach this stage, we must guide our hearts to long for the Unseen realm through mental imagery and practice. We should act as if we are in love with the Unseen realm and warm our relationship with God and our

heavenly family (*Ahl al-Bayt*), even if our hearts are not yet ready and we do not enjoy as much as we should this remembrance of God. This very act of mental imagery and pretending is the key to many spiritual victories and will eventually unlock the heart. As our hearts mature, they learn to remember God until they ultimately reach a state of constant remembrance; in this case, we will not forget God even in the worst circumstances. It should be noted that initially, due to the dominance of lower beloveds and the weakness of the human dimension, our hearts may not have much inclination for the remembrance of their True Beloved. However, since our hearts are compatible with their True Beloved, through practice and mental imagery, they will eventually awaken and fall in love.

Regarding planning for consistent remembrance, we can keep prayer beads, *Mafatih al-Janan*, the Quran, and any tools that remind us of God within reach, so that whenever we feel inclined to remember and supplicate with Him, we can refer to them. For example, a woman engaged in household chores can take advantage of the great rewards God has promised for her work at home and use this opportunity for self-improvement while focusing on the remembrance of God. If the heart does not cooperate, we can use tools like audio recordings of prayers, speeches by great religious figures, and uplifting, *fitrah*-oriented music at home or work to motivate the heart. Visiting mosques and the shrines of the infallible Imams (Peace Be upon Them) also serves as a form of mental imagery that encourages our hearts to awaken.

The Effects and Benefits of the Presence of Heart

As mentioned, the vitality of our human dimension depends on the remembrance of our True Beloved. The remembrance of God, in addition to being the food for the soul and reviving the heart, also provides us with enthusiasm and strength. In fact, when we practice living with our heavenly family and see ourselves in the presence of God, our heavenly fathers, angels, and martyrs, we gradually come to believe that they are powerfully beside us. Therefore, our way of life will be vastly different from before; in this case, we will no longer suffer from anxiety, fear, hopelessness, low self-esteem, or feelings of defeat. Moreover, when the heart establishes a stronger connection with the Unseen realm, Satan loses his power over us, and we can easily recognize his temptations and attacks.

In general, the more our level of presence with and heartfelt attention to God increases, the greater our success, happiness, and inner peace will be. A believer, having known his human dimension, sees himself in the presence of God at all times. The reason for a believer's constant joy and vitality is this continuous presence and connection to the Unseen realm. He is active and lively in all his worldly affairs, as a spouse, parent, and in social and political activities; he never becomes crushed, depressed, or agitated.

In this lesson, we discussed the concept of the presence of heart and stated that heartfelt attention to God is not limited to prayers and acts of worship; rather, our hearts must always feel the presence of Allah, our True Beloved, and never forget or become heedless of His remembrance.

What other methods have you experienced or do you know for achieving the presence of heart? Share them with us and other readers.