

Sublime Goals and a Purposeful, Meaningful Life Through Determination and Planning

How Can We Transform This Fleeting World into an Opportunity for Perfection Through Determination and Planning?

Why, despite being aware of the passage of time and the transient nature of this world, do we not plan as we must to build a lasting future and attain true perfection? This is a question that resonates deep within every person who seeks meaning. Yet, the truth is that many of us, caught in the daily routine and negligence, forget the ultimate purpose of our creation: to become similar to the source of absolute and infinite perfection.

Contrary to secular perspectives, Islamic teachings view humans as beings who transcend mere material needs and worldly desires. By our *fitrah*, we seek a higher meaning and purpose in life, a purpose defined by servitude to God and following His path. Discovering this meaning and realizing it require conscious effort, planning rooted in divine teachings, and, most importantly, steadfast determination in action. Without a clear goal and reliance on God, we are like a ship adrift, never reaching its intended shore.

Determination and planning are not merely tools for worldly success but are two wings for soaring toward human excellence and perfection. These are the keys to unlocking the doors of divine mercy and earning God's pleasure in every aspect of life, be it education, work, social relationships, or spiritual journey. Without these based on religious laws and teachings, achieving lofty goals becomes exceedingly

difficult. Determination is the driving force that propels us toward effort and striving for our goals. Planning, on the other hand, is the roadmap that saves us from confusion and wasted time.

Unfortunately, many of us fail to act on these two essential principles. Laziness, procrastination, fear of failure, attachment to worldly pleasures, and forgetfulness of God are obstacles that prevent us from planning for a bright future and pursuing it with dedication. Satan, too, works tirelessly to divert us from this path, tempting us with fleeting worldly pleasures and makes us forget the hereafter.

A careful examination of the lives of prophets, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Peace be upon them), and God's righteous servants reveals that the secret to their success was nothing other than sincere servitude to God, resolute determination in following His commands, and meticulous planning to make the most of their time. With unwavering resolve and a well-structured plan, they embarked on the path to God's pleasure, achieving the status of nearness to God through relentless effort and perseverance.

The question now is: How can we internalize determination and planning into our lives and gain their countless benefits? In this lesson, we will first explore the importance of these two elements in life from an eternal and otherworldly perspective. Then, we will identify the obstacles to determination and planning, and finally, we will provide practical solutions to overcome these barriers.

How Can We Practice Our Belief in the Hereafter Through Determination and Planning?

Why, despite acknowledging the fleeting nature of this world and the necessity of preparing for the hereafter, do so many of us fail to plan and act with determination in practice? This question occupies the minds of many. There seems to be a fundamental disconnect between our beliefs and our actions. We may believe in the hereafter, yet our lifestyle suggests otherwise.

In Islamic teachings, determination and planning are not merely moral virtues but vital necessities for being born into the hereafter. This birth is an active and conscious process that requires effort, planning, and determination in all dimensions of life.

Determination and planning reflect a true understanding of one's place in the universe and the purpose of creation. If we deeply internalize the belief that this worldly life is merely a temporary stop on an eternal journey toward God and eternity, we will dedicate all our efforts to preparing the necessary provisions for this journey. Determination in this context means avoiding negligence, fulfilling divine duties, and striving to earn God's pleasure in all matters. Planning, on the other hand, involves setting clear goals, identifying appropriate resources, and consistently pursuing those goals.

To better understand this concept, consider a fetus in the mother's womb. The fetus focuses entirely on developing a healthy and prepared body for birth into a new world. By adhering to the natural laws and system of the womb, it strives to be ready for life outside. Similarly, a human must follow divine laws with determination and planning to prepare for their birth into the hereafter. While

attention to worldly matters is necessary, one must not allow them to distract from the ultimate goal of attaining nearness to God and earning His pleasure.

The relationship between life in this world and the hereafter is just like the story of the mother's womb and the world after birth. A fetus that does not grow properly in the mother's womb and fails to prepare for birth will face many problems in the new world. Likewise, a person who does not plan for their hereafter in this world and does not fulfill their duties with determination will encounter regret and remorse in the hereafter. This regret stems from the improper use of life's opportunities in this world and the failure to prepare suitable provisions for the journey to the hereafter.

Unfortunately, many people are more serious about preparing for worldly things like buying carpets, furniture, household items, and obtaining academic degrees than about matters of the hereafter and planning and investing for their eternal life. This is despite the fact that the value of worldly life compared to the hereafter is utterly insignificant [1]. If a person truly believes that worldly life is fleeting and the hereafter is an eternal reality, they will devote all their efforts to earning God's pleasure and preparing themselves for life in the hereafter.

Obstacles to Determination and Planning on the Path of Spiritual Growth

Determination and planning are not just tools for worldly success, but rather are considered two fundamental pillars on the path to spiritual elevation and nearness to God. However, on the journey of growth and planning for a better tomorrow, whether worldly or otherworldly, humans encounter obstacles that can divert them from their main goal.

These obstacles can be divided into two categories: internal and external. Internal obstacles are rooted in the soul and the depths of human existence, arising from weaknesses of the soul, lack of proper knowledge of divine values, and negligence of the ultimate purpose of creation. External obstacles stem from environmental factors, social pressures, and behavioral patterns incompatible with divine values.

Obstacles to determination and planning are serious challenges on the path to elevation and nearness to Allah. However, by knowing these obstacles and striving to overcome them, one can achieve great goals. In the following, we will examine these obstacles in more detail and provide strategies for dealing with them.

Neglecting the Hereafter and Being Captivated by the World

One of the most significant obstacles to determination and planning is neglecting eternal life and excessive attachment to worldly affairs. neglecting in this context refers to forgetting the ultimate purpose of creation and becoming lost in the fleeting pleasures and preoccupations of the world. A person who is consumed by accumulating wealth, seeking fame, and satisfying material desires fails to remember the hereafter and prepare for it. This negligence not only drains a person's energy and potential on transient matters but also deprives them of investing in eternal life.

The world is described as the "farm of the hereafter," meaning that worldly life is an opportunity to sow the seeds of righteous deeds and prepare for eternal life. Neglecting this truth causes one to miss the unique opportunity for growth and elevation. Constantly remembering death and the hereafter, reflecting on the purpose of creation, studying the lives of God's righteous servants, and striving to

gain knowledge of God can save a person from negligence and guide them to the right path.

Superficial Beliefs and Lack of Deep Religious Understanding

Superficial beliefs and a lack of deep reflection on religious teachings are other barriers to determination and planning. Many individuals outwardly adhere to religion but lack a true, profound knowledge of it. This lack of knowledge prevents them from recognizing the true value of religious teachings, which in turn diminishes the motivation and determination needed to act upon them. As a result, such individuals are easily influenced by environmental and social factors, abandoning their religious principles and values.

Faith is a matter of the heart and soul, requiring contemplation and thought. A faith that is not deeply rooted in the soul can easily be swept away by the storms of doubts and temptations. Deep study of the Quran and the lives of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Peace be upon them), participating in religious and scholarly gatherings, asking questions about matters of belief, and striving for gaining *ma'rifa* of God can transform superficial beliefs into a deep and steadfast faith.

Prioritizing Personal Interests and Instant Gratification

Prioritizing personal interests and fleeting pleasures over eternal benefits is another obstacle to determination and planning. People often seek instant gratification and the fulfillment of their desires, neglecting ethical and spiritual

values in the process. This hinders long-term life planning and traps individuals in the cycle of pursuing short-lived pleasures.

Purifying the soul and overcoming low desires are among the most critical factors for achieving true bliss and salvation. A person who cannot master their own desires cannot attain great and sublime goals. Practicing patience and perseverance, controlling low desires, constantly remembering the consequences of forbidden pleasures, and striving to acquire ethical virtues can free a person from the bondage of their lower self and guide them toward lofty goals.

Ignoring the Importance of Expertise in Religious Sciences: A Superficial Approach to Knowledge

Unfortunately, in today's societies, there is less attention paid to expertise in religious sciences and divine knowledge. While individuals spend years to studying and researching to gain expertise in other academic fields, in the field of religion and divine knowledge, people often settle for superficial and general information. This prevents a deep and precise knowledge of religion, resulting in a lack of determination and planning necessary to act upon it.

In our universities, there is no major called Monotheism (*Tawhid*) or Knowledge of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Peace be upon them), while PhD degrees are easily granted for studying Western philosophers and writers like Kant, Hegel, or Shakespeare. This indicates a kind of disregard for the value and importance of divine knowledge in our educational and cultural systems.

Religious teachings describe knowledge as light and ignorance as darkness [2]. Acquiring science and knowledge, especially in the field of religion and divine teachings, is one of the most important duties of every Muslim. This knowledge must be obtained through authentic sources and proper methods. Supporting education and research in religious sciences, encouraging specialization in divine knowledge, establishing academic programs in areas such as monotheism, ethics, and spirituality, and striving to raise the level of religious knowledge in society can help overcome this obstacle.

Practical Strategies for Embedding Determination and Planning in Life

As God's deputy on Earth, the human being bears a profound responsibility. Fulfilling this sacred trust requires effort, determination, and careful planning to make the most of life's limited opportunities, in pursuit of God's satisfaction and the path to perfection. The first step toward determination and planning is selecting lofty goals. Instead of focusing solely on worldly goals, we must choose objectives that bring us closer to God. In other words, we must direct our greatest efforts toward preparing for death and birth into the *Barzakh*, much like a fetus prepares in the mother's womb for a healthy entry into the world.

To achieve this, we can create a list of goals and note how each one contributes to our spiritual growth. For example, if our goal is to earn more money, we must write down how this income can be used to help the needy or support charitable causes. Similarly, if our goal is to learn Arabic, its divine purpose could be to gain a better understanding of the Quran, deepen our grasp of religious teachings, and connect directly with divine revelation. Unfortunately, many Muslims do not prioritize

learning the language of their religion. Another practical strategy is to structure our daily planning with a focus on our connection with eternity. Just as we are diligent about worldly matters, we must show equal concern and planning for matters of the hereafter, maintaining a balance between the two in our schedules. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said, “Work for your worldly life as if you will live forever, and work for your hereafter as if you will die tomorrow” [3].

Each morning, before starting the day, we can create a list of tasks and allocate time for religious obligations, reciting the Quran, and engaging in spiritual activities. For instance, we can include in our daily plan reciting one page of the Quran with reflection on its meanings, attending congregational prayers, or performing a recommended deed such as giving charity to the needy.

Determination in learning and adhering to divine laws is another practical way to embed planning and determination in our lives. For example, we can identify a flaw or weakness in our adherence to religious obligations and plan to address it. If we struggle with concentration during prayers, we can schedule a few minutes of mindfulness before each prayer and then begin it.

We must be cautious not to prioritize worldly matters over those of the hereafter, as preferring the fleeting pleasures of this world over the eternal blessings of the hereafter is a form of folly and shortsightedness. To achieve this, we can dedicate time to reflecting on death and the hereafter, remembering that this world is temporary while the hereafter is everlasting [4]. We should strive to reduce our attachment to worldly matters and focus more on the hereafter. Watching documentaries about life after death, studying books about resurrection and the

Day of Judgment, and attending funeral ceremonies can be highly effective in this regard, as attachment to this world is the root of every error [5].

By diligently applying these practical steps and drawing inspiration from divine teachings, we can embed determination and planning in our lives and achieve our goals. We must remember that success requires effort, patience, and perseverance.

In this lesson, we first posed the question of why, despite being aware of the passage of time and the temporary nature of this world, we fail to plan for the hereafter. We then explored the concepts of determination and planning from the perspective of Islam. Subsequently, we identified internal and external obstacles to determination and planning and provided practical strategies to overcome them.

Now, we invite you to share your thoughts and experiences on this topic. What obstacles have you experienced on the path of determination and planning? What strategies have you used to overcome them? Your comments could inspire others to take firmer steps on this path.

References

[1]. Quran, 9: 38

[2]. Knowledge is a light, which Allah casts into the heart of whomsoever He wills.

Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, *Lantern Of The Path Misbah al-Shari'ah*, Ansariyan Publications, 2000, p. 10.

[3]. Ibn Abī Firās, Warrām. *Tanbīh al-Khawāṭir wa Nuzhat al-Nawāzīr.*, Maṭba‘at al-Ḥaydarīyah, vol. 2, p. 234:

<https://lib.eshia.ir/12759/2/234>

[4]. “Allah may shower His mercy on him who ponders and takes lesson thereby, and when he takes lesson he achieves enlightenment. Whatever is present in this world would shortly not exist, while whatever is to exist in the next world is already in existence. Every countable thing would pass away. Every anticipation should be taken to be coming up and everything that is to come up should be taken as just near.”

Peak of Eloquence (Nahjul-Balagha), Sayed Ali Reza, Elmhurst, New York, Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Seventh U.S. ed., 2009, p. 474.

[5]. Imam Sadiq (Peace be upon him): “The root of all sins is love of this world.”

Shaykh al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, book 1, chapter 126 : “Love of and Greed for Worldly Things,” *Hadith 1*.