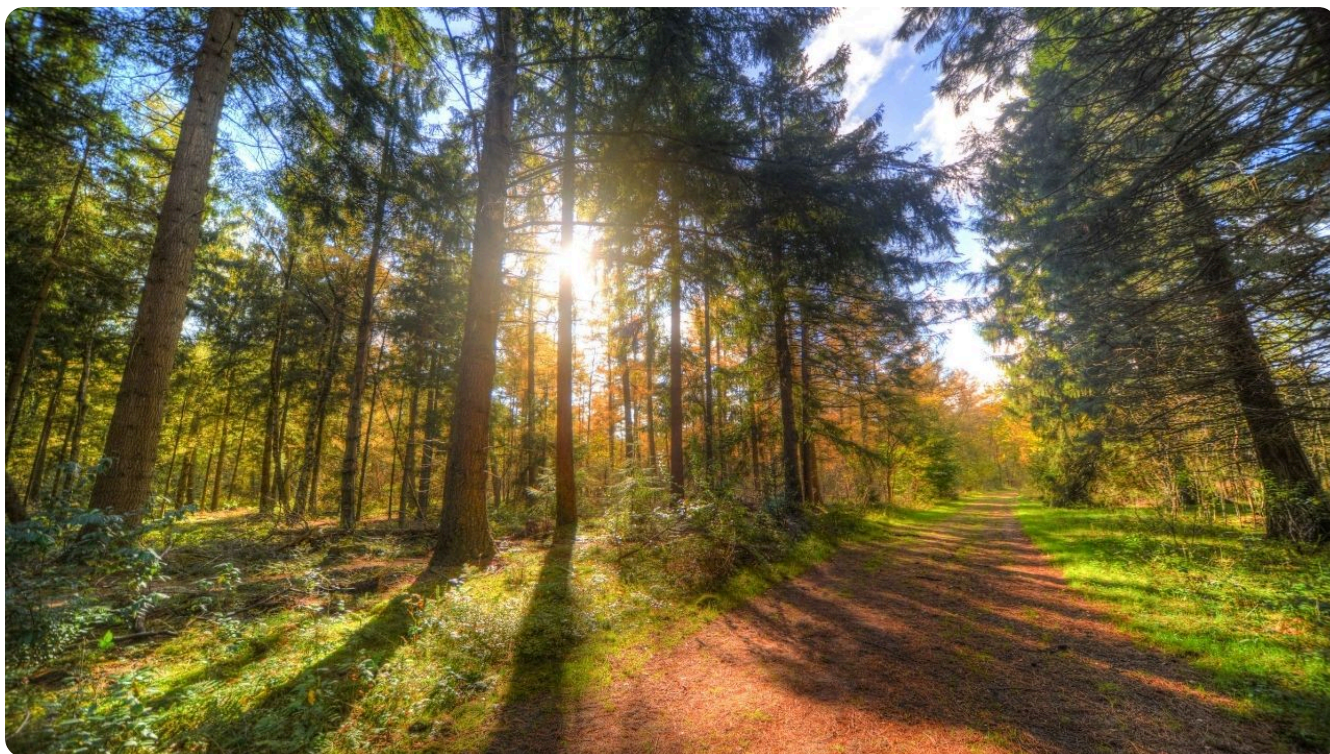


The Passion for Superiority

The criteria on which people who live far removed from the morality of the Qur'an base their evaluations of one another are generally worldly features such as wealth, status, fame, beauty or lineage. According to this understanding, a person's being wealthy, coming from a well-known family or having a wide social circle gives him superiority over other people. A person deprived of these means, on the other hand, may not receive the same interest and respect, no matter how honest and morally upright he may be.

Evaluating people in this way stems from forgetting the true nature of the life of this world. That is because it is God Who creates everything a person possesses. It is our Lord Who determines a person's family, birthplace, physical characteristics and the means he will attain. Therefore, it is exceedingly wrong for a person to lay claim to the blessings bestowed upon him and become arrogant because of them. What a person must do is give thanks for the blessings God has bestowed and use them in a manner that will earn His good pleasure.

The measure of superiority in the Sight of God, however, is entirely different from the values people assign to one another. Our Lord has revealed in the Qur'an that importance should be attached not to a person's wealth or position in society, but to his piety. A believer who is aware of this truth determines both his own behavior and his attitude toward people according to the Qur'an.



Boasting of the Blessings of This World Is a Deception

An arrogant person believes that the qualities he possesses make him different from and privileged over other people. He also expects those around him to acknowledge this supposed superiority. Traces of this expectation can be seen in his speech, behavior and relations with people. At times he seeks to be admired by speaking of his wealth, at times by talking about the people he knows, and at other times by bringing his family or achievements to the fore.

Yet when he reflects upon it, he can see that nothing he boasts of actually belongs to him. It is God Who gives man his intelligence, health, talents and opportunity to work. God also creates the conditions that enable him to attain success. Man strives for all these things, but his efforts produce results only by our Lord's will. By disregarding this truth and attributing a share of the blessings to himself, a person distances himself from gratitude.

Moreover, he has no assurance that the means which cause him to become arrogant will continue. He may lose in a short time the wealth he accumulated over many years. The health in which he trusts may deteriorate, he may lose his position, and the people who show him interest may distance themselves from him. Even if none of these things happen, he will leave behind all his worldly means with death. God reveals in a verse the deceptive aspect of the life of this world:

"Know you (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children..." (Surat al-Hadid, 20)

A believer does not forget this transient nature of worldly blessings. When he possesses wealth, beauty or success, he regards them as blessings from God. A decrease in one of his blessings does not lead him to ingratitude toward God. He knows that he is in need of our Lord in both abundance and hardship; in both cases, he takes pains to behave in a manner that will earn God's good pleasure.



Man's Responsibility Is to Use Blessings in a Manner That Earns God's Good Pleasure

The transient nature of worldly blessings does not require a person to distance himself from them. A believer takes pleasure in the beauties God creates; he works, produces and strives to increase his means. Yet while doing all these things, he does not forget the Hereafter. He knows that what he possesses is a means of trial for him.

For example, a person with ample material means may use these blessings to show off or make people dependent on him. With the same means, it is also possible for him to help people in need, support good works and bring about beauty around him. A person who holds a position of

authority may use his authority to oppress others, or he may use it to uphold justice, prevent injustice and benefit people. Man's responsibility lies in what kind of morality he displays with the blessings bestowed upon him.

Our Lord reveals the difference between the blessings that are the adornments of the life of this world and enduring righteous deeds as follows:

"Wealth and sons are the embellishment of the life of the world. But, in your Lord's Sight, right actions which are lasting bring a better reward and are a better basis for hope." (Surat al-Kahf, 46)

For this reason, a believer does not use his means to receive praise from people. He acts with the same sincerity even when no one sees him and the good he does is unknown. That is because what matters to him, before what people think about him, is being able to earn God's good pleasure. He does not forget that God sees everything he does and knows his intention.

Arrogance Prevents a Person from Accepting the Truth

One of the significant effects of arrogance on a person is that it makes it difficult for him to admit his mistake. A person who regards himself as superior may consider listening to another person's advice humiliating. When he is reminded of a wrong action, instead of correcting it, he tries to show that he is right. Thus, for the sake of protecting his lower self, he disregards the truth shown to him by his conscience.

For a person with this understanding, who gives the advice is also important. He may not wish to listen to someone younger than himself, less well-known or with more limited material means. Instead of considering the truth of what is said, he looks at the other person's standing in his own eyes. Yet accepting a true reminder does not humiliate a person. On the contrary, his ability to see and correct his mistake is an indication of his sincerity and good morality.

In the account of Pharaoh revealed in the Qur'an, it can be seen how arrogance can lead a person onto a very wrong path. Pharaoh trusted in the power he possessed and displayed an arrogant attitude toward the message of the Prophet Moses (pbuh). When he was reminded of God's signs, instead of complying with these reminders, he responded with oppression and threats. Yet the power in which he trusted could not save him from the end ordained for him by God.

A believer meticulously avoids such morality. He does not turn a reminder made to him into an argument in order to defend his lower self. He evaluates his behavior according to the Qur'an; when he sees his mistake, he abandons it. He regards earning God's good pleasure as more important than appearing right before people.



The Slander That Prophets Sought Superiority

It is revealed in the Qur'an that people with a desire for arrogance also evaluated the prophets' message according to their own understanding. Since these people had built their lives upon attaining status, prestige and personal interests, they did not wish to understand the sincerity of God's messengers. They accused the prophets who called them to serve God of seeking superiority.

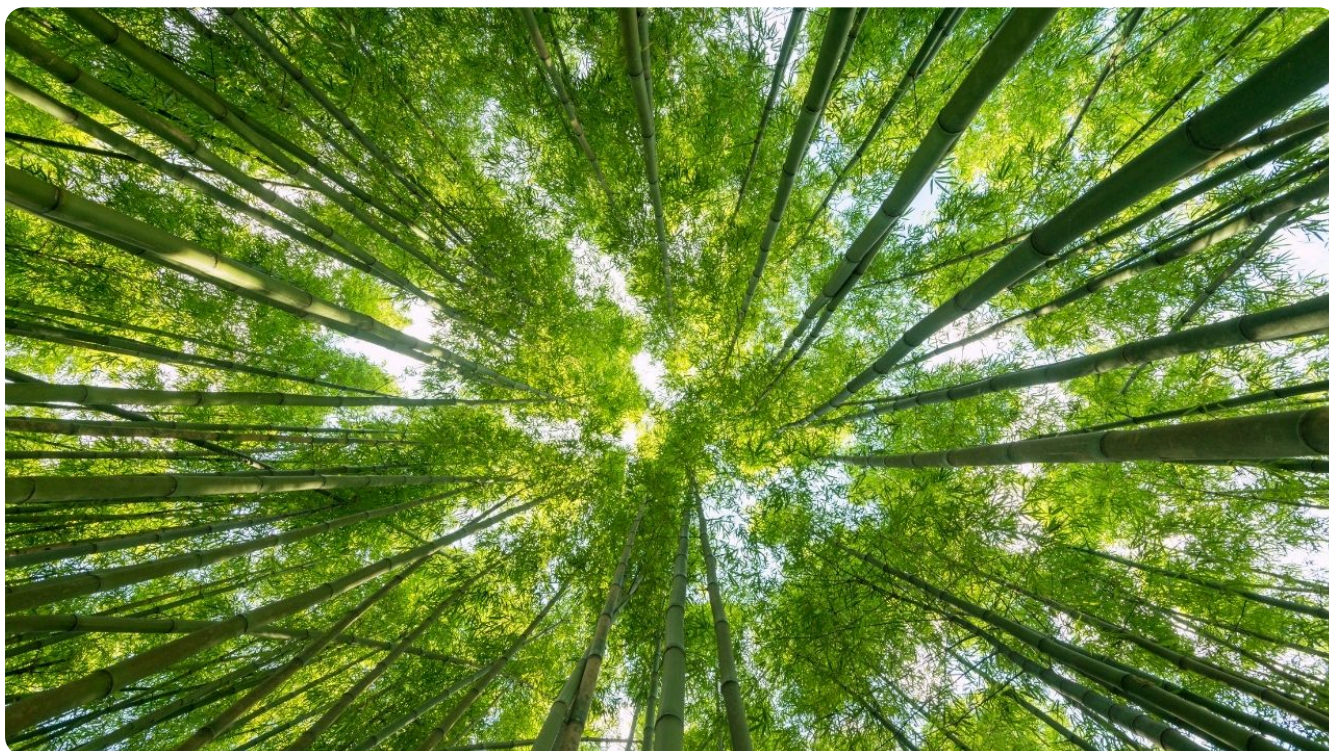
The words of the leading unbelievers among the Prophet Noah's (pbuh) people are revealed in the verse as follows:

"The ruling circle of those of his people who were unbelievers said, 'This is nothing but a human being like yourselves who simply wants to gain ascendancy over you. If God had wanted He would have sent angels down. We never heard of anything like this among our ancestors, the

earlier peoples.'" (Surat al-Mu`minun, 24)

Yet the Prophet Noah (pbuh) was calling his people to have faith in God and serve Him. Their portrayal of this message, which he conveyed for their salvation, as a quest for position was a result of their own erroneous point of view. They regarded people's being called to live by God's commandments as a danger to their own positions.

This example also shows why a person must seriously consider the desire for arrogance within his lower self. Arrogance is not merely a behavioral disorder that emerges in relations with people. When a person prefers the desires of his lower self to what is right, he may even oppose the most beneficial reminders made to him. For this reason, a believer is constantly on his guard against such an attitude that covers his conscience.



Looking Down on People Is Contrary to the Morality of the Qur'an

Another justification put forward by the Prophet Noah's (pbuh) people was the position in society of those who believed in him. The words of these people are revealed in the verse as follows:

"They said, 'Why should we believe you when the vilest people follow you.'" (Surat ash-Shu`ara, 111)

These words clearly reveal the error in the assessments of arrogant people. Instead of listening to the words of a prophet who called them to have faith in God, they looked down on the people who followed him. They regarded being in the same community as contrary to their supposed superiority, and therefore refused to believe.

Yet the fact that a person is little-known, poor or lacks a powerful social circle does not show that he is worthless in the Sight of God. Likewise, wealth, fame and influence are not evidence that a person is superior in the Sight of God. Reaching such a judgment on the basis of a person's outward means would mean disregarding the measure revealed in the Qur'an.

A believer does not display a morality that changes according to the wealth or status of the person before him. He is respectful, courteous and just both when speaking with a poor person and when he encounters someone well-known in society. He does not try to humiliate anyone; he does not turn people's shortcomings into a subject of mockery. He knows that he too is a servant created by God and is in need of His help at every moment.

All Power and Honor Belong to God

A person who does not live by the morality of the Qur'an may think that he too will gain power by remaining close to those he regards as powerful. In order not to lose their support, he may remain silent about their injustices and defend their wrongdoings. Thus, for the sake of the prestige he hopes people will give him, he consents to acting against his conscience.

At the root of this error lies the belief that the power people possess is independent of God. Yet no person possesses any power of his own. All people live under the conditions created by God and can do only as much as He wills. Our Lord reveals this truth in a verse as follows:

"Do those who take the disbelievers as protectors, rather than the believers, hope to find power and strength with them? Power and strength belong entirely to God." (Surat an-Nisa, 139)

A believer places his trust in God. He makes no concessions regarding God's commandments in order to obtain people's support. When faced with an injustice, he does not change his attitude according to the position or social circle of the person who commits it. He acts justly and strives to display the attitude that will earn God's good pleasure.

This trust in God does not distance a believer from taking precautions or working. On the contrary, a believer fulfills his responsibility in the best possible manner. Yet he does not regard the precautions he takes or the means at his disposal as assurances independent of God's help. He experiences the peace of knowing that it is our Lord Who creates the outcome.



The Measure of Superiority in the Sight of God Is Piety

People's belonging to different families, peoples and societies is part of the diversity in God's creation. It is wrong to turn these into a cause for arrogance or hostility. Our Lord has revealed the measure of superiority among people as follows:

"Mankind! We created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know each other. The noblest among you in God's Sight is the one with the most piety (who best performs his duty to God). God is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Surat al-Hujurat, 13)

A person who possesses piety loves God, fears and reveres Him, and seeks His good pleasure at every moment of his life. He takes pains to abide by God's limits not only when he is with people, but also when he is alone. He does not abandon honesty to obtain a personal benefit; he does not

forsake justice because it is difficult for his lower self. He lives knowing that God sees him at every moment.

For this reason, a believer's effort is directed not toward appearing superior to the people around him, but toward improving his faith and morality. He does not regard himself as adequate by counting the shortcomings of others. He reflects on his own mistakes, strives to correct them and asks God for forgiveness. Nor does he become arrogant because of the good deeds he performs; he gives thanks to our Lord, Who gives him the opportunity to do good.

It is God Who knows people's hearts and sincerity. Since a believer does not forget this truth, he does not adopt an attitude of regarding himself as definitely superior and looking down on others. Hoping for God's good pleasure, mercy and Paradise, he strives throughout his life to increase his piety.

A Believer Preserves His Trust in God in the Face of Difficulties

Believers may be tested with various difficulties in the life of this world. They may experience financial hardship, suffer injustice or face pressure. Yet these conditions do not cause them to measure their value in the Sight of God by worldly means. A person who has faith knows that every event he encounters is under God's knowledge and control.

Our Lord commands believers as follows:

"Do not give up and do not be downhearted. You shall be uppermost if you are believers." (Surah Ali `Imran, 139)

Trusting in these glad tidings, a believer preserves his enthusiasm and determination. The abundance of the means possessed by those before him does not cause him to despair. He hopes for God's help; he continues his efforts with patience, wisdom and good morality. He regards difficulties as a trial in which he can demonstrate his devotion and sincerity toward our Lord.

For this reason, every person must consider according to which measures he directs his life. Does he make the same effort to earn God's good pleasure that he makes to earn people's praise? Do

the blessings he possesses lead him to gratitude, or do they cause him to become arrogant? When he is reminded of what is right, does he comply with it, or does he try to defend his lower self?

Every person has an opportunity before him to correct his mistakes and sincerely turn to God. What matters is that he does not postpone this opportunity and does not spend the life granted to him on the transient subjects of boasting in the life of this world. The dignity and honor a believer seeks are in the Sight of God. What he must do for this is wholeheartedly submit to our Lord, meticulously live by the morality of the Qur'an and make a sincere effort to advance in piety.

<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/the-passion-for-superiority>