**How the Qur'an Teaches People about Allah**| Dr. Ghâzî al-Tawbah|

The Qur'ân presents us with an approach to teaching the essential tenets of faith that has the ability to strengthen a person's character and contribute in a positive way to the person's emotional and mental development. Exploring the Qur'ân's approach to teaching these beliefs can help us in conveying the essence of our faith in the best possible way.

A Muslim's belief is established upon six essential tenets: belief in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and Divine Decree.

These beliefs were set forth in the famous hadîth where the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked him: "What is belief?" to which the Prophet replied: "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, his Messengers, the Last Day, and Divine Decree."

This hadîth is the basis upon which the beliefs of a Muslim are built, and we will take it as the framework for our discussion.

Belief in Allah

The Qur'ân speaks about Allah in a most distinctive and effective way. Instead of a dry discourse, it tells us about Allah through a depiction of His actions in the created world. It speaks about the creation of the human being, the formation of the heavens and the Earth, day and night, the Sun, the Moon and the stars. It also talks about His attributes – like His omnipotence, knowledge, mercy, hearing, and sight – in the context of discussing the signs in creation and matters of the seen and unseen.

This approach has a positive effect on a believer's psychological development. To clarify this, we will look at just one example – how the Qur'ân discusses the creation of the human being.

The Qur'ân tells us that Allah created the human being from clay: " We created the human being from a quintessence of clay." [Sûrah al-Mu'minûn: 12]

We are also told how Allah appointed the human being to be a vicegerent on Earth, and that when He informed the angels of this, they asked him why this creation deserves such a status:

Behold, when your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- while we celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy name?" He said: "I know what you know not." [Sûrah al-Baqarah: 30]

We are then told how the angels were commanded to bow before Adam: "We created you, then We fashioned you. Then we said to the angels: 'Prostrate to Adam.' They all did so except for Satan. He was not among those who prostrated." [Sûrah al-Ahzâb: 11]

Allah tells us how he created for Adam a mate: "And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in this are signs for those who reflect." [Sûrah Rûm: 21]

The Qur'ân speaks about how Allah blessed the human being with the gifts of hearing, sight, and a discerning heart: "He it is Who hath created for you ears and eyes and hearts. Small thanks you give!" [Sûrah al-Mu'minûn: 78]

"Say (unto them, O Muhammad): He it is who gave you being, and has assigned unto you ears and eyes and hearts. Small thanks you give!" [Sûrah al-Mulk: 23]

"And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and hearts that perhaps you might give thanks." [Sûrah al-Nahl: 78]

The Qur'ân tells us that Allah submitted what is in the Earth and the sea to the human being, and even brough the Sun and Moon into the service of human welfare:

"And He has constrained the night and the day and the Sun and the Moon to be of service unto you, and the stars are made subservient by His command. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for people who have sense. And whatsoever He has created for you in the earth of diverse hues, lo! therein is indeed a portent for people who take heed. And He it is Who constrained the sea to be of service that you eat from it fresh meat and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships plowing it that you may seek of His bounty and that perhaps you may give thanks." [Sûrah al-Nahl: 12-14]

When a Muslim considers these truths about his creation and contemplates on how different he is from the inert matter from which he came, his heart and mind naturally turn to the glorification of Allah. When a Muslim considers how he has been chosen from among all creation to be vicegerent on Earth, and how Allah has honored him by having the angels prostrate before Adam, he naturally glorifies Allah and thanks Him for the immensity of that honor. When the Muslim regards his hearing, sight, and discerning heart as being Allah's gifts, and the act that we have mates to give us comfort, this inspires the Muslim with love for Allah. The Muslim, furthermore, hopes from Allah to continue to provide these blessings.

When the Muslim considers how Allah has placed even the motions of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon in his service – when he considers how Allah has allowed us to cultivate the Earth and to sail the seas and reap its many bounties – this inspires the Muslim to glorify Allah even more and to place his hopes in Allah all the more strongly.

Belief in the Angels

The Qur'ân takes an equally unique approach to discussing each of the other articles of faith, one that enriches the hearts and minds of the believers. These matters of belief are always presented in the context of tangible events that demonstrate Allah's omnipotence, mercy, and might.

With respect to the angels, we are told that they were created from light. Some of them bear the throne, and constantly glorify Allah. We are told that they witness the believers in their prayers, that they attend the Friday prayers with the human beings.

We are informed that there is an angel who is the custodian of the Fire, that there is an angel of death who takes forth our souls when we die. We are told that angels are always tending to humanity and protecting them by Allah's command.

When a Muslim reads about these matters in the Qur'ân and the authentic Sunnah, and is sure in his belief, this inspires the Muslim to glorify Allah even more. Moreover, the believer feels love for the angels, since he knows that they are always seeking our forgiveness, that they witness our prayers. Our love for Allah grows as well when we consider that it is He who brought these magnificent creations of light into being and has them remain in our presence protecting us.

Belief in the Scriptures

The Qur'ân mentions by name some of the scriptures that Allah has revealed to humanity. There are the scrolls that were revealed to Abraham, the Torah which was revealed to Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel that was revealed to Jesus, and the Qur'ân which was revealed to Muhammad – peace be upon all of the messengers.

The Qur'ân praises the earlier scriptures in a number of its verses. It also describes itself in the best of terms, affirming itself as a light and a powerful source of guidance.

There can be no doubt that belief in the scriptures as presented in the Qur'ân and Sunnah bolsters the believer's reverence and love for Allah, since it is Allah who revealed those scriptures and through them guided humanity to what is good for them in this world and the next. It is Allah who lighted our way.

Belief in the Messengers

The Qur'ân and Sunnah tell us that Allah sent prophets and messengers to many different nations and peoples. The stories of a number of these prophets are given to us in great detail. We are told about their lives, their missions, their miracles, and the challenges that they faced. We learn about how they were rejected by their people and how Allah saved them and made them triumph over those who opposed them. There is scarcely a chapter of the Qur'ân that does not mention something about one of the prophets.

This approach to teaching the Muslims' belief in Allah's prophets and messengers plays a vital role in developing the character of the believers. The messengers were sent by Allah to be living examples of how to lead a righteous life. Muslims seek to inculcate into their personalities the exemplary mode of conduct and the impeccable behavior of the messengers. In turn, this leads to a greater reverence for Allah who sent those messengers to be our guides.

The stories of the prophets instill in us the qualities of hope and optimism. We look forward to Allah's help in our righteous endeavors, no matter how much hardship we might face. This is because we read how the prophets, after shouldering great responsibilities and facing enormous obstacles, were always helped by Allah in the end.

The reader of these stories develops a strong sense of kinship for the prophets and identifies with them. By walking in their footsteps, the believer is protected from succumbing to feelings of alienation with respect to his or her faith.

Belief in the Last Day

The Qur'ân, along with the Sunnah, provides us with considerable details about the Last Day. Starting individual's final day on Earth, we are taught about the intoxication of death and being placed in our graves. Then the sacred texts speak about the resurrection, the gathering of the people for the judgment, and then the ultimate destinations of Heaven and Hell.

It is clear from the texts that the reason these matters are mentioned in such detail is to inspire in the believers the fear of Allah's punishment and the hope for His reard.

Belief in Divine Decree

Everything that happens in Creation takes place in accordance with Allah's knowledge and power. It is all recorded in the sacred tablet before the creation of the heavens and the Earth. These beliefs, presented in their simplicity, inspire trust in Allah.

Conclusion

The Qur'ân and Sunnah always speak about matters faith in the context of the tangible world and human life. They do not offer dry discourses on faith. They do not present intellectual abstractions or delve into philosophical explorations. The sacred texts do not pose intellectual exercises to prove Allah's existence, like Muslim theologians were later to do.

This simple, straightforward approach to faith is one that is practical and relevant to the people. It is an approach that fortifies belief and strengthens character.