

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

*The Trust of Leadership: Every
One of You is a Shepherd*

DELIVERED AT

Masjid Adam



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

The Trust of Leadership: Every One of You is a Shepherd

The First Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَإِنَّ أَصْدَقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَخَيْرُ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ، وَشَرُّ الْأُمُورِ مُحْدَثَاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ مُحْدَثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ.

All praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His help, and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from our sinful deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger. To proceed: the truest speech is the Book of Allah, the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ, the worst of affairs are the newly invented matters, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ، بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي * وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي * وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي * يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي *

We praise Him, and we send blessings upon His noble Messenger. To proceed: I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed; in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. My Lord, expand for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and untie the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech.

Sūrah Ṭā Hā (20:25 to 28)

Dear brothers and sisters, **assalāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.**

Every One of You Carries a Flock

When we hear the word leadership, our minds travel to thrones and titles, to those who govern nations and command armies, and we quietly excuse ourselves, thinking the matter has nothing to do with us. Brothers and sisters, this is among the great misunderstandings of our religion. In the sight of Allah, leadership is not a rare crown worn by a few. It is a trust laid upon the shoulders of every single one of us, in the home, in the workplace, in the masjid, and over our own souls. There is no man or woman in this gathering who does not lead something, and who will not be questioned about it. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ erased forever the idea that responsibility belongs only to rulers when he spoke words that place every believer upon the watchtower of accountability.

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا، وَالْخَادِمُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ.

Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The man is a shepherd over his family and is responsible for his flock. The woman is a shepherd in the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock. And the servant is a shepherd over the wealth of his master and is responsible for his flock.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 893, Muslim 1829 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Consider the image the Prophet ﷺ chose, the shepherd, the ra‘ī. A shepherd does not own his flock; he tends what belongs to another. He rises in the cold and the heat, he counts his animals at dusk, he searches for the one that strays, and he answers to the owner for every head entrusted to him. This is exactly how Allah wants the leader to see himself: not as an owner who exploits, but as a guardian who will hand back what he was given and be asked how he cared for it. The father over his children, the mother over her household, the manager over his team, the teacher over his students, the imam over his congregation, the one with a following over those who listen to him, every one of them is a shepherd, and over every one of them stands the question of the Day of Judgement: what did you do with the flock I placed in your hands?

Leadership is a Trust Before It is an Honour

Our age has taught us to crave authority for the power it brings, the status, the income, the admiration of people. Allah teaches us to tremble before authority for the weight it carries. Leadership is, before

anything else, an amānah, a trust, and the trust is the heaviest thing in creation. Allah described its weight in a verse that should make every leader pause before he reaches for a position.

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا
وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا *

Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it, but man bore it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.

Sūrah al-Aḥzāb (33:72)

The mountains, in all their immensity, shrank from the trust. The heavens and the earth feared to carry it. Yet the human being took it up, often without understanding what he had shouldered. Brothers and sisters, every position of authority is a piece of that trust, and the believer who grasps this does not run toward leadership for the thrill of it. He approaches it the way a man approaches something heavy and sacred, knowing he will answer for it. And the first law of this trust is that authority must be handed to those worthy of it, and exercised with justice. Allah joined these two together in one command, a verse the scholars called the verse of governance.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا
بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا *

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.

Sūrah an-Nisā' (4:58)

Ibn Kathīr, may Allah have mercy on him, explains that this verse gathers the whole of just leadership into two duties: to place responsibilities in the hands of those qualified to bear them, and to rule between people with fairness once you hold them. He notes that to give a trust to one unworthy of it, out of favouritism or tribe or bribe, is itself a betrayal of the amānah. AṣṢa'dī, may Allah have mercy on him, adds that the trusts here are broad, covering the rights of Allah and the rights of people, every duty placed upon a person that others rely on him to fulfil. So the man who appoints his relative over a task he cannot do, while the able and the honest are passed over, has betrayed the trust before he has even begun, and the Prophet ﷺ warned that whoever appoints a man over a group while there is among them someone more pleasing to Allah has betrayed Allah and His Messenger and the believers.

The One Who Craves It is Often the Least Fit for It

Here our religion turns the world upside down. The world tells us to campaign for position, to promote ourselves, to seize authority wherever we can. The Prophet ﷺ taught that the safest leaders are often those who never sought the role, and that the one consumed by ambition for it is frequently abandoned to it without help from Allah. When his beloved companion Abū Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, asked to be given a position of command, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not flatter him. He loved him too much to deceive him.

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، إِنَّكَ ضَعِيفٌ، وَإِنَّهَا أَمَانَةٌ، وَإِنَّهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خِزْيٌ وَنَدَامَةٌ، إِلَّا مَنْ أَخَذَهَا بِحَقِّهَا وَأَدَّى الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا.

O Abū Dharr, you are weak, and it is a trust, and on the Day of Resurrection it will be a disgrace and a regret, except for the one who takes it by its right and fulfils what is due upon him in it.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1825 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Read those words carefully, for they place leadership upon a knife's edge. On the Day of Resurrection, authority will be disgrace and regret, khizy wa nadāma, a humiliation before all of creation, except for the one who took it by its right and discharged its duties. There is no middle ground. Either leadership lifts a man to the company of the just on pulpits of light, or it drags him down to a public disgrace on the day when secrets are exposed. The Prophet ﷺ was not discouraging Abū Dharr from goodness. He was protecting him from a burden heavier than his shoulders could carry, and he taught us a principle the ambitious of our age have forgotten, that the role is not a prize to be won but a load to be feared. And he warned the leader who betrays his people of a punishment that should freeze the heart of anyone who holds power over others.

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يَسْتَرْعِيهِ اللَّهُ رَعِيَةً، يَمُوتُ يَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَهُوَ غَاشٍ لِرَعِيَّتِهِ، إِلَّا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ.

There is no servant whom Allah places in charge of a flock, who dies on the day he dies while he is deceiving his flock, except that Allah forbids Paradise to him.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 7150, Muslim 142 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun 'Alayh

The deceit spoken of here, ghishsh, is not only stealing from people; it is neglecting them, abandoning their needs while enjoying the privileges of the position, sleeping comfortably while those under your care are wronged. The manager who lets injustice run through his department and looks away, the father who provides money but withholds attention and guidance, the one with influence who feeds his followers what harms them for the sake of his own gain, all of them are warned by this hadith.

Authority that is not discharged faithfully does not merely lose its reward; it becomes a barrier between the servant and Paradise.

Justice is the Crown of Leadership

If the trust is the foundation of leadership, justice is its crown. Allah loves the just, and He has reserved for them a station so high that the Prophet ﷺ described it in light. Those who rule fairly over whatever Allah placed in their care, whether a nation or a household or a single transaction, will stand on the Day of Resurrection in a place of unimaginable honour.

إِنَّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَنَابِرٍ مِّنْ نُورٍ عَنِ يَمِينِ الرَّحْمَنِ، وَكِلْتَا يَدَيْهِ يَمِينٌ، الَّذِينَ يَعْدِلُونَ
فِي حُكْمِهِمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ وَمَا وَلُوا.

Indeed, the just will be with Allah upon pulpits of light, at the right hand of the Most Merciful, and both of His hands are right hands: those who are just in their judgements, and with their families, and in what they are placed in charge of.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1827 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Notice how the Prophet ﷺ widened the circle of justice in this hadith. He did not speak only of judges and kings. He named those who are just in their judgements, and with their families, and in everything placed under their authority. The father who is fair between his children, refusing to favour one over another, is among these. The employer who pays the worker his full due, and pays it before his sweat dries, is among these. The believer who is fair even to those he dislikes, because Allah commanded that enmity must never push us into injustice, is among these. This is why ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, who governed an empire stretching across three continents, would patrol the streets of Madīnah at night to see for himself whether any of his flock went hungry, and he said that if a lost animal stumbled on the bank of the Euphrates, he feared Allah would question him as to why he had not paved the road for it. That is what it means to feel the weight of the flock. His justice did not come from policy alone; it came from his certainty that he would stand before Allah and be asked.

The Prophet ﷺ Led by Consultation, Not Domination

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Prophet's ﷺ leadership, and the one our age most needs to recover, is that he led the greatest community in history not by domineering over them but by consulting them. Though he received revelation from the heavens, Allah commanded him to seek the counsel of his Companions in the affairs of this world, and to honour their views.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ
فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ *

So by mercy from Allah, you were gentle with them. Had you been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from around you. So pardon them, seek forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter. Then, when you have decided, place your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely upon Him.

Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān (3:159)

Reflect upon the order of this verse, brothers and sisters, for it is a complete manual of leadership. First, gentleness, for harshness scatters people from a leader no matter how right he is. Then pardon and seeking forgiveness for those he leads, because a leader who cannot overlook the faults of his people will rule over no one for long. Then consultation in the matter, *shūrā*, so that the people feel ownership of the decision and the leader benefits from minds wiser than his own in their fields. And only then, after listening, the firm decision and reliance upon Allah, so that consultation does not collapse into endless hesitation. Allah made this the character of an entire community, praising the believers in another verse for conducting their affairs by mutual consultation.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ *

And those who have responded to their Lord, established the prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and spend out of what We have provided them.

Sūrah ash-Shūrā (42:38)

And the Prophet ﷺ did not merely teach consultation in words; he lived it on the most dangerous days of his life. At the Battle of Badr, he chose a position for the Muslim army, and a Companion named al-Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir, may Allah be pleased with him, came forward and asked, with the utmost respect, whether this was a place Allah had commanded him to take, in which case there was nothing to say, or whether it was a matter of opinion and military strategy. When the Prophet ﷺ answered that it was strategy and judgement, al-Ḥubāb said that the position was not the best one, and he proposed that the army advance to the nearest well, take it, and deny the water to the enemy. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, leader of the believers and beloved of his Lord, accepted the counsel of a soldier without a trace of wounded pride, and the army moved. Consider what this teaches every leader who is too proud to be corrected by those beneath him in rank. The greatest human being who ever lived took the better idea even when it was not his own.

At the Battle of the Trench, when Madīnah faced an alliance of armies far larger than its own, it was Salmān al-Fārsī, may Allah be pleased with him, who suggested a tactic the Arabs had never used, the digging of a great trench around the exposed flank of the city. The Prophet ﷺ approved the plan at once, and then, far from standing apart as commanders do, he took up the pickaxe and dug alongside his Companions, carrying the earth upon his own back until the dust covered his blessed body, and tying a stone to his stomach against the hunger that they all felt. This is leadership that shares the burden rather than merely assigning it. And on a journey, when the time for prayer came before the Prophet ﷺ returned to the camp, the Companions appointed ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf to lead them, and the Prophet ﷺ arrived to find the prayer already in progress. Rather than interrupt and assert his own rank, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ quietly joined the rows and prayed behind his own Companion. The leader of all the Muslims stood as a follower behind one of his men, teaching us that true authority is secure enough to take its place in the line.

And when he sent Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, may Allah be pleased with him, as a governor and judge to Yemen, he did not hand him a rigid script. As related by Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī, he asked Mu‘ādh how he would judge, and Mu‘ādh answered that he would judge by the Book of Allah; and if he did not find the ruling there, then by the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; and if he did not find it there, then he would exert his own reasoned judgement and spare no effort. The Prophet ﷺ was pleased and praised Allah for guiding the messenger of His Messenger to what pleases Him. See how the Prophet ﷺ entrusted Mu‘ādh with real authority and real responsibility, training him to think and to weigh and to decide, rather than reducing him to a man who only follows orders. This is how leaders raise other leaders, by trusting capable people with genuine responsibility.

Choosing the Right People, and Carrying the Load

A leader is only as strong as the people he places around him, and our religion gives us a precise standard for whom to choose. When the righteous man in Madyan considered hiring Mūsā, his daughter named the two qualities that matter above all others.

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ ۖ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ *

One of the two women said: O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.

Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ (28:26)

Two qualities, and the whole of sound appointment rests upon them: al-qawī, competence and strength to do the work, and al-amīn, trustworthiness and integrity in doing it. Strength without trust is a capable thief. Trust without strength is a sincere man who cannot carry the task. The believer who appoints people, whether in business, in the community, or in the home, seeks both, and refuses to hand responsibility to a person merely because he is a relative or a friend. And when Yūsuf, upon him be peace, sought a position of authority, he did not seek it for wealth or status, but because he knew himself qualified to discharge a duty no one else could carry in a time of famine. He said, place me

over the storehouses of the land, for I am a knowing guardian, ḥafīẓ ‘alīm, one who protects and one who knows. He asked for the role only because he could fulfil its trust, and that is the only honourable reason to seek authority. The leader who follows these examples carries the load himself, shares the hardship of those he leads, appoints the able and the honest, and consults before he commands. This was the way of the Prophet ﷺ, and it is the inheritance he left to every shepherd among us.

Leadership in the Life We Actually Live

It would be a failure of this gathering to speak of shepherds and trusts as if they belonged only to the past or to those in high office. The flock Allah has placed in your hands is closer than you think, and the questioning will be just as real.

The Leadership of the Home

The first and weightiest leadership most of us will ever hold is over our own families. A father is a shepherd, and his children are his flock; a mother is a shepherd in her home, and the Prophet ﷺ named her so by name. This leadership is not measured by how much money enters the house, but by whether the hearts inside it are guided toward Allah. The parent who provides every comfort yet never teaches the prayer, never sits to guide, never shows justice between the children, has neglected the very flock he will be asked about first. To lead a home is to be gentle as the verse commanded, to consult a spouse rather than dominate, to be fair between children so that none grows up feeling unloved, and to carry the family toward the Hereafter and not only through this world. The Prophet ﷺ said the best of you are the best to their families, and he was the best of them.

The Leadership of Work and Community

Many in this masjid hold authority over others through their work, a team they manage, employees who depend on them, a business whose conduct they set. Every one of them is a shepherd. The manager who is just to those beneath him, who does not crush them, who pays the worker his due promptly and does not exploit the one who cannot complain, is practising the leadership of the pulpits of light. And those who serve this community, who lead in the masjid, on its committees, in its schools, carry a trust over the religion of people, which is heavier still. Leadership in the community is service, not a throne. The one who seeks a position on a board to feel important has misunderstood the whole affair; the one who takes it to relieve a burden from the Muslims has understood it.

The Leadership of Influence

And in our time a new and vast leadership has appeared that our grandparents never knew, the leadership of influence over an audience. Anyone with a platform, a following, a voice that others listen to, has become a shepherd over the minds and hearts of those who follow him, and he will be asked about that flock. Did he lead them toward Allah or away from Him? Did he feed them truth or vanity, modesty or shamelessness, contentment or endless craving? The deceitful shepherd is not only the corrupt official; he is also the one who holds the attention of thousands and uses it to lead them into heedlessness for the sake of his own gain. If you have any influence over others, however small, know that it is a trust, and ask yourself where you are taking the people who trust you.

A Moment of Honest Accounting

Before we close this first khutbah, let each of us name the flock that Allah has actually placed in our hands, and weigh ourselves against the questioning that is coming. Who are the people under my care, my children, my spouse, my employees, my students, those who follow my voice, and how have I tended them? Am I just among them, or do I favour some and neglect others? Do I consult those I lead and overlook their faults, or do I dominate them and demand of them what I do not demand of myself? Do I carry the burden alongside them, or do I assign the hardship to them and keep the comfort for myself? And the question that gathers all the others: if I were called this very day to stand before Allah and account for the trust He placed upon me, would I rise to a pulpit of light, or would I meet the disgrace and regret of which the Prophet ﷺ warned? These questions are not meant to crush us. They are the lantern of the faithful shepherd, who tends his flock in this life knowing exactly to Whom he will return it.

I say these words of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for me and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for indeed He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

I say this statement of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for myself and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

Closing of the First Khutbah

The Second Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and all his Companions. O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

A Reminder Carried Home

Dear brothers and sisters, in the first khuṭbah we learned that every one of us is a shepherd answerable for a flock, that leadership is a trust heavier than the mountains before it is ever an honour, and that on the Day of Resurrection it will be either a pulpit of light or a public disgrace, with nothing in between. We saw the Prophet ﷺ lead by gentleness and consultation, taking the better counsel of al-Ḥubāb at Badr, the plan of Salmān at the Trench, praying behind ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, and entrusting Mu‘ādh with real authority in Yemen. The danger now is that we admire these meanings for an hour and then return to our homes and our work and lead exactly as we did before. So let us turn admiration into a plan.

A Practical Plan for the Faithful Shepherd

Begin where your flock is closest. Look this week at the people Allah has placed under your care, and resolve upon justice among them, refusing to favour one child over another or one worker over another out of mere liking. Make consultation a habit rather than an exception: ask your spouse before you decide what affects the family, ask your team before you set what affects their work, and let the people you lead feel that their voice reaches you, as the Prophet ﷺ consulted those around him on the gravest of days. Then carry a share of the burden yourself, for the leader who only assigns and never lifts will not be followed with love, and the Prophet ﷺ dug the trench with his own hands. Choose the people around you by the standard Allah gave, the strong and the trustworthy, and refuse to hand a trust to anyone, however close to you, who cannot discharge it. And guard yourself above all from becoming a deceitful shepherd who enjoys the privileges of a position while neglecting the people it was given to serve.

And to those who are led, and that is all of us in one way or another, our religion gives a duty too. Obey those placed in authority over you in all that is good, support them in righteousness, and pray for their guidance rather than only complaining of their faults, for the Prophet ﷺ tied the welfare of a community to the bond of love and prayer between the people and their leaders. He said:

خَيْرَ أَمْتِكُمُ الَّذِينَ تُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَكُمْ، وَيُصَلُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَتُصَلُّونَ عَلَيْهِمْ.

The best of your leaders are those whom you love and who love you, who pray for you and for whom you pray.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 1855 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Yet this obedience is never absolute, for there is only One whose command is obeyed in all things. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ drew the limit clearly, so that no one would ever use authority to drag people into sin.

السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ عَلَى الْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ فِيمَا أَحَبَّ وَكَرِهَ، مَا لَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ، فَإِذَا أُمِرَ بِمَعْصِيَةٍ فَلَا سَمْعَ وَلَا طَاعَةَ.

To listen and obey is binding upon the Muslim in what he likes and dislikes, so long as he is not commanded to disobey Allah. But if he is commanded to commit an act of disobedience, then there is no listening and no obeying.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 7144, Muslim 1839 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

This was the spirit of the leadership of the rightly guided. When Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq, may Allah be pleased with him, took authority over the Muslims after the Prophet ﷺ, he stood before them and said that he had been placed in charge of them though he was not the best of them, that they should help him if he did well and correct him if he erred, that the weak among them was strong in his sight until he secured their right, and the strong among them was weak in his sight until he took from them what was due. Then he said the words that summarise the whole of our religion's view of authority: obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger; and if I disobey Allah and His Messenger, then you owe me no obedience. That is a leader who knew he was a shepherd and not an owner, a servant of the trust and not its master.

Between Hope and Fear

Let no leader leave this place crushed by despair over the trust he carries, and let no one leave deceived into thinking his authority is light. Brothers and sisters, if you look back and find that you have been harsh where you should have been gentle, or careless where you should have been just, the

door of return is wide open, and a single sincere change in how you treat your flock can turn the whole account around. And if Allah has made you just and faithful in your leadership, do not grow proud of it, for the heart that admires its own justice is one step from arrogance, and many a leader was undone not by his failures but by his pride in his successes. Walk between the two wings of hope and fear: hope in a Lord who raises the just to pulpits of light at His right hand, and fear of a Day when the neglected flock will testify against the shepherd who failed it.

The Promise to the Just

Let us not forget where this road leads, for the shepherd who tends his flock faithfully through the long nights is steadied by remembering the dawn. The just leader is the first of the seven whom Allah will shade beneath His Throne on the Day when there is no shade but His, and the people of justice are raised to pulpits of light near the Most Merciful. And the believers are taught to long not merely to be saved, but to be made leaders of the righteous, guiding others to the good. This is the supplication Allah placed upon the tongues of His most beloved servants.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا *

And those who say: Our Lord, grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes, and make us a leader for the righteous.

Sūrah al-Furqān (25:74)

Reflect upon this prayer, brothers and sisters. The servants of the Most Merciful do not ask to be served; they ask to be made leaders who guide others toward taqwā, beginning in their own homes with their spouses and children. Every act of justice you show to your flock, every burden you lift from those you lead, every time you consult instead of dominate and serve instead of exploit, is a single step toward that station of the just, raised in light near your Lord. Do not measure these steps as small. Measure where they are taking you.

Closing Du‘ā

Dear brothers and sisters, let us raise our hands to the One in whose hand is all authority, who gives dominion to whom He wills and removes it from whom He wills. O Allah, make us faithful shepherds over every trust You have placed in our hands, and raise us among the just upon pulpits of light.

O Allah, make us just to those under our care, gentle with them, and a means of guiding them to You. O Allah, grant us righteous leadership in our homes, and make our spouses and children a comfort to our eyes, and make us leaders for the righteous. O Allah, set right the affairs of those who lead the Muslims, guide them to justice, and place over us the best of us and not the worst of us. O Allah, forgive the believing men and the believing women, the living among them and those who have passed. O Allah, set right the affairs of this Ummah, unite the hearts of the Muslims upon truth, and protect our families and our children in an age of trial. O Allah, relieve the distressed, heal the sick,

settle the debts of the indebted, and grant safety and provision to our brothers and sisters who are oppressed and afraid in every land, for You are the All Powerful and they have none besides You.

O Allah, forgive us and our parents, and have mercy upon them as they raised us when we were small. O Allah, accept from us our prayers, our fasting, and our standing before You, and overlook our shortcomings and our sins. O Allah, grant us beneficial knowledge, hearts that truly fear You, and sincere deeds for Your Face alone. O Allah, seal our lives with the best of deeds, and let the last of our words in this world be the testimony that there is no god but You. Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The Final Reminder

Remember the command of your Lord, with which Allah closes the affair, the command of justice and excellence and kindness to kin, for it is the foundation of every trust we carry and every soul we lead.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ
يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ *

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Sūrah an-Nahl (16:90)

So remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him for His favours and He will increase you. And establish the prayer.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ