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THE BEST OF YOU

<https://youtu.be/SIQnLs6m5VM>

The best of you are the best to your family, because your true character comes out at home. When you've had a long day at work, or a long day at school, you face a lot of difficulties, a lot of struggle. You've had a hard day, and you've tucked it in so no one sees it of you, no one sees the flaws, no one sees the weaknesses. But then you go home and you unleash the monster. You unleash the thing that's been building within you the entire day. And who do you unleash it to? The people that you should care about most.

I know you're all here for Amr Salamah and I'm here for Amr Salamah too. But 15 minutes inshallah and we'll be done together. As was mentioned, I actually have been looking for the answer to this question for the past couple months. And it's that a lot of people on the outside look at you thinking that you are something.

You know, you're a youth director, you're a pharmacy student. I'm sure many of you are MSA members, you lead things in your Masjid, you're in Islamic organizations. You just graduated from college and now you're a doctor or you're an engineer or you're a teacher. You just grew a beard and now people are calling you Sheikh.

You just wore the hijab and people are calling you Sheikhhah. And you know, sometimes it's kind of hard to reconcile the fact that all of these people are looking at me thinking that I am something. Attributing this status to me, you know, thinking in their mind that I am superhuman. Or thinking in their mind that I'm angelic or thinking that I'm better than them.

And the question comes, well what happens when the people see something of me but when I look at myself in the mirror I see someone completely different? What happens when the person that people see is not who I actually believe that I am? And how do we reconcile between them? So I hope that this is a struggle that I'm not the only one facing.

Does anyone kind of feel me on this? All right, alhamdulillah, that's good. I actually have a story that kind of just goes along with this. One of my halka students actually came up to me the other day, actually this was a couple months ago. And she was like, so Shereen, when you go home, do you just eat dates and drink Zem-Zem?

And I was like, no, homegirl, I eat cereal in the morning and I eat burgers for lunch and I eat koshari for dinner. You know, I'm normal. You know, just because I'm at the Masjid doesn't mean that I eat something different or I breathe a different type of oxygen than you do. And unfortunately, you know, when we work in these types of organizations or in our Masjid, people start to look at you and think that you truly are not human.

Or that there's, you know, something superhuman about you. So that's kind of the thing that I want to address today is what do we do when we feel like the person in the mirror is different than the person everyone else sees? So subhanAllah, you know, something that we have to do is first try to understand whether those people are two different people.

Whether the person that you see in the mirror is truly different than the person that your community sees. Or whether you're just being too harsh on yourself and you truly are amazing. Or whether you're thinking of yourself too highly and you really should start to reconsider some of the things you've done.

And so I kind of came up with a litmus test as to what you can ask yourself to try to understand whether those two people are really two people or if they're one. And the first question that you can ask yourself is, and I want you guys to think about this, if I were to go up to someone in your community whom you work with, or if I were to go up to someone, you know, on your Shura in the MSA, or someone in your Masjid that you work with, or someone that you've mentored in a halaqah, or someone that you work with at work, you know, your co-resident, or whatever it may be.

And I were to ask them, you know, tell me about Shereen. Like what is Shereen like? What does Shereen, when you're with Shereen, how do you feel? When these people are with you, how do they feel when you're around them? And think of that answer. If I were to go up to someone at work or someone that you work with, what would they describe you as?

Okay, think about that in your mind. Now if I were to go and ask your sibling at home, or ask your mother, or ask your father, or ask your brother, what is Shereen like to you? How do you feel when Shereen is around you? How does Shereen make you feel? Do you get a different answer? Is it that the people outside think something of you, and when you treat them, you treat them a certain way, yet you go home and you treat the people at home differently?

And if you find that those two answers are different, then know that there is a problem. And again, I wrote this because I need the answer, and I'm saying this to myself before anyone, my mother's in the audience and she can attest to this. But I'm sure many of us can look within ourselves and say, you know what, those two answers are different.

The person that I am on the outside is different than the one I am at home. The person that the community sees of me is different than the one that my mother sees of me. And the Prophet, sallallahu alayhi wa sallam, told us, he said, خيركم خيركم لأهلي وأنا خيركم لأهلي He said that the best among you are the best to your family, and I am the best to my family.

Why does the Hadith not say خيركم خيركم the best of you are the best to your communities, or the best of you are the ones who give the best speeches, or the best of you are the ones who give the best حلقات, or the best of you are the best at work? Because it's really easy to be good outside. It's really easy to be nice to the people at work because if you're not, they're going to subtweet you on Twitter.

And if you're not, they're going to think you're terrible, and they're going to have this illusion of who you are, and they're going to talk bad about you. But if you do something bad to your mom, she's not going to disown you, I hope. You know, if you're disrespecting your sister, she's still going to be your sister.

But if you do something bad on the outside, you can potentially ruin a relationship. And so that's why it's easy for us to be good on the outside, but it's hard to be good

at home. And that's why the Hadith goes that the best of you are the best to your family, because your true character comes out at home.

When you've had a long day at work, or a long day at school, you face a lot of difficulties, a lot of struggle. You've had a hard day, and you've tucked it in so no one sees it of you, no one sees the flaws, no one sees the weaknesses. But then you go home and you unleash the monster. You unleash the thing that's been building within you the entire day.

And who do you unleash it to? The people that you should care about most. The people that deserve the most respect from you. You know, and that's what we do. So I need you guys to think about that. And Aisha Radiallahu anha was asked about the Prophet, salallahu alayhi wa sallam. She was asked, you know, we know that the Prophet, Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam, on the outside is amazing.

Tell us about what he's like at home. We don't get to see him at home. Aisha, tell us what he's like at home. And her response was profound, not just in the way that she described the Prophet, but the fact that it came from her. She said, kaana Quranan yamshi, that he was a walking Quran. He wasn't just a walking Quran when he was at the Masjid.

He wasn't just a walking Quran when he gave a halaqa. Not just when he was in the community. He was a walking Quran when he was at home too. The Quran that he was walking, he walked outside and he walked inside. The people who were within his home felt the same way that the people on the outside felt.

That's why this is profound. That's why this is important. But I'm sure all of us are trying to be that Quranan yamshi on the outside. We're trying to be that amazing halaqa giver on the outside. We're trying to be awesome to everyone on the outside, yet to the people at home we don't care. And there's a beautiful line of poetry that I read the other day and it's scary.

Listen to this. What good am I if do not... if I do not fill the plates of the ones who fed me but fill the plates of strangers? What good am I if I do not fill the plates of the ones who fed me yet fill the plates of strangers? What good are you if the one who raised you doesn't see anything from what she's raised you with?

What good are you as the one who fed you doesn't see any of the fruits of what she's taught you? The one who spent her blood, sweat, and tears on you for 20, 30

years? And the one who is the reason as to why you are who you are today? The one who helped you get there? Yet as soon as we get our degree, as soon as we can speak, as soon as we're something to the community, we forget about everyone who taught us.

We forget about the people who made us who we are. So that's the first question you want to ask yourself. What does your public self look like versus what does your family see of you? What do the people in the community see versus what does your mother see and what do your siblings see? And the second question that I want you guys to think of, and again I'm talking to myself before anyone here, is compare what your salah looks like in the Masjid when there's a bunch of people in the congregation versus your salah at home when the only person that can see you is Allah.

And I'm sure if we were to think within ourselves, the answer to those two questions, at least for myself, is probably different. That when I'm outside, I'm acting a certain way, yet when I'm inside, I'm not the same.

My worship in the eyes of people is not the same as my worship when it's only Allah who's watching me. And the question is why does it matter who's watching when Allah was watching in both? Why does it matter who else is around you when Allah was always around you?

If you guys were at the session right before this, Sheikh Tariq Mustaq mentioned a beautiful story and I'm going to share it so if you heard it, I'm sorry that I'm repeating but he talked about how when he was 16, you know, he became like a Quran assistant in his Masjid and he was teaching alongside of like this awesome Sheikh, right?

He was talking about how he was 16, teaching Quran and he felt like a G. He was like, man, I'm like awesome, you know, I'm 16 and I'm teaching Quran to other people. And so one day, I guess he went to the Masjid early, like before fajr or something, and he went and he found that his Sheikh's car was parked outside the Masjid but all the lights were closed.

So he was like, okay, that's kind of weird. And he mentioned that, you know, he had to go make wudu so he walks into the bathroom only to find that his scholar, his teacher, one who was taught by many righteous, amazing scholars before him,

was on his knees cleaning the toilet of the Masjid. And so Sheikh Tariq Mustaq goes to him and he's like, Sheikh, like what are you doing?

You're an amazing Sheikh, you learned with this person and you learned with that and your status is this, like how are you on your knees cleaning the Masjid? And his response was profound. He says, this is the work that the one who sees always sees. This is the work that when no one else saw you, Allah saw it.

Because what we do is we love to be the one with the microphone, we love to be the one who everyone can attribute things to, we love to be the one with the title, you know, I love to be quoted, I love for people to know who I am. Yet Allah sees the things that no one else sees. The things that you thought no one saw.

When you did the dishes and your mom didn't tell you thank you, Allah saw that. You know, when you picked something off the floor and no one saw it, Allah saw that. The reason why we do things in the community is because we love that recognition, we love for people to pat us on the back and say good job.

We love the volunteer appreciation, Jannah, we love that. But realize you're not always going to get it and sometimes it's better for you that only Allah saw. And it could be that that deed that you did in secret that no one saw besides Allah is the reason why you entered Jannah. And everything that you've done in the public, everything that people saw, everything that was out in the open was stuff that you did for the wrong reasons and you never know that may not even count for you.

So this is kind of our thought process in understanding whether or not we have this problem. Now once you find out you have the problem, what do I do? What's the solution? So a couple things I was thinking about is if you feel like people are holding you up to this standard, you know, you are this and this and this and you have this title and this title and this title and you're amazing, challenge yourself to live up to that standard that people are holding you to.

You know, if you go home and you say man, people think I'm great but I'm actually not, try to actually be great. And it's not for the people, it's not for people to say you know, Shereen Salama was great but it's for me to improve myself so Allah can say Shereen Salama was great. For me to take the standard that you put me at and to try to actually achieve it, not for you but for Allah.

And the second thing is that for every public deed that you do in the eyes of people that you double that in your private... in your private life, in your private ibadah. That man if you prayed in the Masjid, try to pray at home when no one else can see you besides Allah. Try to wake up when everyone's asleep in the dark, just you and Allah, create that relationship.

And the third, and this is a dua that was taught to us by Abu Bakr radiallahu anhu, he used to receive praise and there was this beautiful dua that he used to say. And it goes, Allahumma ghfir li ma la ya'lamun waj'alni khairan min ma ya'dunnoon. Which translates to, oh Allah forgive me for what they do not know about me and make me better than what they think that I am.

Because it's funny we like to cover up the fact that all of us have a hidden past. All of us have some secret, all of us have some sin, all of us have something that we've done that no one else knows. But remember that when you're being praised that you once were in that state. Not to put yourself down but for you to remember that Allah is the one who brought you there.

And finally and I'll conclude in reminding us that this is a journey. This by no means is something that we are going to accomplish. It's going to be a constant struggle. But at least when we die we'll be dying on the path and struggle for the sake of Allah Subhanu wa Ta'ala. So I ask Allah Subhanu wa Ta'ala to make us among those who can improve upon ourselves and to make the journey to him easy.

SubhanakAllahumma bihamdik nashadu an la ilaha illa anta nastaqfiruka wa natubu ilayk. Bi salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah.

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