**WHAT NEXT AFTER SERVICE?**

BEING AN INTERACTION PAPER WITH THE OUTGOING CORP MEMBERS ORGANIZED BY THE “MUSLIMS’ CORPERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (MCAN)”, BAUCHI STATE CHAPTER.

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious the Most Merciful Who sent Prophets and Messengers to the mankind and Jinn with the sole aim of guiding their present life for the betterment of this life and the Hereafter. May Allah’s blessings and peace continue to shower onto His Beloved Prophet, Muhammad the son of Abdullah, his Companions, his household and all those who followed their footstep till Dooms Day.

 Islam is an all-inclusive religion that does not leave anything outside its guidance and control. Allah says in the Qur’an;

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ} [الأنعام: 38]

There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book, then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered.

It has therefore laid down foundation for regulation of everything pertaining human life on this earth. As Muslims, we all know that the essence of human creation and his living on this planet is to undergo an examination prepared by Allah, the Creator. The outcome of the test determines who gets it right and otherwise in the Hereafter. The successful ones will go to eternal bliss and the failed ones will serve appropriate punishment from Allah based on their failure to abide by His injunctions. As far as Islam is concern, there is nothing that qualifies a human creation to be a successful one in his life other than his compliance to the purpose of his creation because the life here is a temporary one and does not have a permanent status here on its own. This is because whatever one acquires and whatever social, economic or political status one attains in this life is on temporary basis and it is going to depart from him. Allah says in the Qur’an;

 مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ [النحل96]

Whatever is with you, will be exhausted, and whatever with Allah (of good deeds) will remain. And those who are patient, We will certainly pay them a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do

The prosperous person is he who abides by the law of his Creator and the loser is he who disobeys his Creator. Allah reveals the Qur’an to guide mankind on this fundamental principle of life.

 This interaction is going to be based on the content of one of the shortest chapter of the Qur’an which, even though very short but contains this singular essence of existence. This is *Surah al-Asr* which is the number 103 in the arrangement of the Qur’anic chapters with a total of 3 verses only. The Chapter was revealed in Makkah, during the first half of the Qur’anic revelation periods. In spite of its shortness, the surah is one of the greatest chapters of the Glorious Qur’an as it summarizes the major theme of the Qur’an like *Surah* *al*-*Fatihah*. On the merits of this surah, Al-Imam al-Shafi’iy was reported to have said; "If the people were to ponder on this Surah, it would be sufficient for them.'' Al-Imam Al-Tabarani recorded from `Abdullah bin Hisn Abi Madinah that he said, "Whenever two men from the Companions of the Messenger of Allah used to meet, they would not part until one of them had recited Surat Al-`Asr in its entirety to the other, and one of them had given the greetings of peace to the other.' Below is the Text of the *Surah;*

 ﴿وَالْعَصْرِ # إِنَّ الإِنسَـنَ لَفِى خُسْرٍ # إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّـلِحَـتِ وَتَوَاصَوْاْ بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْاْ بِالصَّبْرِ# ﴾

(By *Al*-`*Asr*. Verily, man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience.)

 The time means either the for *Salat* *al*-*Asr*, the period of one’s life or the time in general without specification. It is the subject of oath because of its importance in human life and the world system at large. Muslim scholars explain that the duration of human is like his capital in a business and all what he incurs throughout his life are either profits or lost. Thus, the meaning of the Prophet’s saying that “**Everybody goes out in the morning and sell themselves, thereby setting themselves free or destroying themselves."**

 Every human being ends up selling out himself at loss with the exception of those who abide by three conditions mentioned in the surah as follows;

1. Believe in Islamic Creed (*Al*-*Iman*)
2. Doing the right thing *al-Amal al-Salih*
3. Counseling each other on truth and patience.

As for believe it includes all what is mentioned as part of *Iman* and Islam by the Prophet (SAW) in the second Hadith of Al-Nawawi. i.e. belief in Allah, His Angels, His Sacred Books, His Prophets and Messengers, the Last Day and Divine will and destination.

Righteous deed is often interpreted by some scholars to mean ritual acts and devotions. However, it means much more than that to include anything that is done in accordance with the teachings of the *Shari’ah* for the sake of Allah. This include all what we do as human beings to sustain our lives and that of our family and relatives, anything done to promote life on this earth, anything done to help other none human creations, etc. righteous deeds, in this context also include keeping away from unlawful acts and anything harmful to human being unless where it is allowed in the *Shari’ah.* At this critical level of our life, we must try to understand the meaning and importance of *al-Amal as-Salih* and the intimate relationship that exists between belief and deeds (*al-Iman wa al-Amal)*

Emphasis on *al*-*Kasb* (working to earn a living) is the priority of many texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah because Islam considers a Muslim’s engagement in pursuing livelihood as an act of Ibadad. Islam prepares *al*-*kasb* over *ibadah* in some cases as a means of driving oneself closer to Allah as evident from a number of Hadiths of the Prophet (SAW). Islamic approach to labour and employment encourages that everybody should partake in gainful employment for him to earn a sustenance from Allah’s bounties. The best consumption to man is that which he erns through his efforts.

Failure to abstain from evils and its consequence on rituals such as salat, zakat, sawm, etc is emphatic in Islam. As part of righteous deeds, a muslim must abstain from all actc that are prohibited in the Shari’ah such as zina, consumption of alcohol, intruding into others right, illegal acquisition of wealth, stealing, backbiting, inflicting harm on others, and all sorts of prohibited acts. A ‘bankrupt’ person in Islam is he who comes forth on the Day of Resurrection with lots of good deeds that are acceptable to Allah, but alongside, he had cheated his fellow human beings in his life. The rewards of his good deeds would be deduced to his victims until his account of good deeds becomes empty, Allah will then take from the evil deeds of whom he cheated and bring it fort to his account and at the end the person is taken to the Hellfire. Sins like *al*-*hasad* (envy) directly consumes from one’s good deeds like the fire consumes firewood.

 As young as we are, we have no better time to imbibe the habit of counseling in the truth and patience than now. The truth in believe and ideology, the truth in our attitudes and culture, the truth our socio-economic and political choice in life. As a Muslim, one does not have alternative to the truth because following it is not optional in all our engagements. When you choose to be a public servant you must adhere to and uphold the truth and right always. “If you cannot beat them please do not join them.”

 In the cause of doing that, we must be patient and encourage each other for that. Al-*Sabr* is one of the most significant attitude of believers without which one cannot withstand the temptations of the Satan in carrying out religious commandments. Thus, Ibn Ashur records in his book that *iman*, according to some scholars is mainly about two halves; *al*-*Sabr* and as-Shukr (patience in carrying out the religious injunctions and thankfulness to Allah in all his favours). *Sabr* is mentioned more than seventy times in the Qur’an as it always leads one to success in all his pursuits. See Qur’an 7: 137 in the case Banu Israeel, 2: 153, 32: 24 and other verses that speak about the importance of *al*-*Sabr*. Without *Sabr*, the Prophet and his Companions would not have achieved success in establishing Islam on earth in their life. We should always bear in mind that whatever situation we find ourselves in, Allah only wants to test us and bring out those who can succeed. The only way to success in the trying moment is through patience and perseverance.

 As we join the labour market or at best, life in a larger society, we should always remember the teaching of this Surah. It encourages us to believe in Allah as well as in *Qadr* and other components of *iman* and work hard in order to meet our portion of life. As such, there is nothing that is meant for us that will not come to us no matter the situation and changing time. We should therefore fear Allah and not to disobey him simply because we want to secure a source of living. We should also take the necessary steps followed in order to achieve our legally allowed dreams without deviating from the path of Allah. We must work hard as Muslims bearing in mind that whatever challenges we face in the cause of earning *Halal* are recorded as part of our good deeds (*al-Amal as-Salih*).

 In Islam, labour is considered a virtuous deed and obligatory upon all able bodied person in the society. Man has many needs to fulfill; needs for food, water, cloth, shelter, medicine, education etc. and since he is required to fulfill these needs for himself and his family through lawful means, he is obliged to work. So while work is mandatory, begging is highly discouraged unless extremely necessary. From this understanding, work to provide sustenance for oneself and one’s family is considered as an act of worship which has merits above nonobligatory acts of spiritual devotions.

Islam encourages Muslims to engage themselves in gainful employments in order to earn livelihood. This is demonstrated in a number verses of the Qur’an and traditions of the Prophet (SAW). “Sayyidina Raafi' ibn Khadeej (RA) narrates that a person (once) enquired from the Prophet (saws) which income was better and more clean. (What was a better way of earning one's livelihood)? "The one who works with his hands, and every trade that was (done) with honesty," replied the Messenger of Allah (saws).” (Musnad Ahmad). Zubair bn Awam (RA) reported that the Messenger of Allah said: That one of you takes his rope and then comes with a load of wood upon his back and sells it, and that thereby Allah guards his face, is better for him than that he should beg of men whether they give him or refuse him.” Umar bn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam, said: “Let not one of you sit in his house rather than actively seeking sustenance saying: ‘O God provide for me.’ When you know quite well that the sky does not rain gold and silver.”

We should be elements of positive change in our societies in line with the teachings of the third verse of *Surah al-Asr*. The necessity of commanding good and discouraging evil is an individual obligation through all possible means, with one’s hand/power, with tongue/intellect and at the level one’s heart when one falls short of the first two. We are all shepherds and responsible to ourselves and those under our control. We must preserve and uphold Islamic ethics in labour and other relations as employers and as employees.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LABOUR RELATIONSHIP IN ISLAM

There are four basic principles in labour relation in Islam as follows;

1. Promoting public good must be the cardinal objective of both the employer and the employee;

2. Justice for all in the relation without indiscrimination to either of the parties;

3. Compassion by the employer to the employee and vise vasa; and

4. Truthfulness and Honesty in dealings with labour matters as none of the parties is allowed to cheat against the other.

TIPS FOR BEING A SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE

1. Understand Your Employer’s Goals 2. Learn Your Boss’ Likes and Dislikes 3. Show Up for Your Team 4. Get to Know Your Colleagues 5. Don’t Be a Gossip 6. Have a Positive Attitude 7. Accept Feedback Gracefully 8. Be a Professional 9. Go the Extra Mile 10. Be a Problem Solver 11. Take Initiative 12. Stretch Your Skill Set 13. Volunteer for New Projects 14. Become a Mentor

TIPS FOR *BARAKAH* (BLESSINGS) IN OUR LIFE AND EARNING;

1. Thankfulness to Allah, 2. Reliance on Allah, 3. Al-Istigfar, 4. Reading the Qur’an, 5. Giving charity, 6. Earning halal income and sincerity in dealing, 7. Remembrance of Allah in everything, 8. Avoiding extravagance, 9. Being kind to parents, 10. Kindness to near relatives, 11. Unifying forces in everything, and 12. Fear and consciousness of Allah.

سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك أشهد أن لا إله إلا أنت أستغفرك وأتوب إليك!!!