

Where Do We Stand?

The Journey of Self-Assessment: Measuring Our Islam, Iman, and Ihsan

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His help and forgiveness, and seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from the consequences of our deeds. Whoever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomever He allows to go astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger.

Dear brothers and sisters!

One of the greatest deceptions of Shaytan is to make a person constantly judge others while forgetting to judge himself. We carefully notice the faults of our family members, neighbors, colleagues, and fellow Muslims, but rarely pause to ask the most important question: "Where do I stand before Allah?" Every day brings us closer to the Hereafter, and every passing moment is another page added to the record of our deeds. A wise believer is not the one who is preoccupied with the shortcomings of others, but the one who continually examines his own heart and prepares for the meeting with his Lord.

Islam teaches us that true success begins with *Muḥasabah* (self-assessment). Before Allah holds us accountable on the Day of Judgment, we must hold ourselves accountable in this world. Today's khutbah is an invitation to examine our lives honestly through the three great dimensions of our religion: Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. Where are we today? What is strong within us? What needs repair? These questions are not meant to discourage us, but to guide us toward sincere repentance, spiritual growth, and closeness to Allah.

1. Islam, Iman, and Ihsan: The Complete Framework of Our Religion

Before we can assess ourselves, we must first understand what Allah expects from us. The most comprehensive explanation of our religion is found in the famous Hadith of Jibrīl, narrated by Sayyiduna Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA)

One day, while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, there appeared before us a man. He sat before the Prophet ﷺ and began asking him about the foundations of the religion.

He asked the Prophet ﷺ:

يَا مُحَمَّدُ، أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ

"O Muhammad, tell me about Islam."

The Prophet ﷺ replied:

الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَتُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ، وَتَحُجَّ
الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا

"Islam is to testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; to establish the prayer, pay the zakah, fast the month of Ramadan, and perform Hajj to the House if you can do so."

He then asked about Iman, and the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ

"It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His revealed Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and in the Divine Decree, both its good and its bad."

Then he asked about Ihsan, and the Prophet ﷺ replied:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ.

"It is to worship Allah as though you see Him. And if you cannot see Him, then know that He surely sees you." (Sahih Muslim)

After he left, the Prophet ﷺ said:

فَإِنَّهُ جِبْرِيلُ، أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ.

"That was Jibrīl. He came to teach you your religion." (Sahih Muslim)

This hadith teaches that our religion rests on three inseparable pillars. Islam is our outward obedience through prayer, fasting, zakah, Hajj, and living according to Allah's commands. Iman is the faith that fills the heart with love, trust, hope, fear, and reliance upon Allah. Ihsan is spiritual excellence, worshipping Allah with sincerity and constant awareness that He is watching us. Think of a building: Islam is the foundation, Iman is the structure, and Ihsan is its beauty. Without Islam, the building collapses; without Iman, it becomes hollow,

and without Ihsan it loses its life and beauty. Therefore, every believer should strive to strengthen all three, for together they form the complete framework of our religion and the path to success in this world and the Hereafter.

2. Why Self-Assessment Is Necessary

Allah commands us to examine ourselves. He says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul look to what it has sent forward for tomorrow." (*Al-Hashr* 59:18)

This verse is one of the greatest foundations of Muḥasabah.

Notice that Allah does not command us to evaluate other people. He commands every soul to evaluate itself. Not our spouse. Not our children. Not our neighbors. Not our community.

A successful businessman constantly audits his business. He reviews inventory, profits, losses, and liabilities. Without regular audits, bankruptcy may arrive unexpectedly.

Likewise, spiritual bankruptcy occurs when a believer goes through life without ever examining his soul.

3. The Self-Assessment of Umar ibn al-Khattab

Sayyiduna Umar (RA) said:

حاسبوا أنفسكم قبل أن تحاسبوا، وزنوا أعمالكم قبل أن توزن عليكم

"Take account of yourselves before you are taken to account. Weigh yourselves before you are weighed."

Who is saying these words? Not an ordinary Muslim. The man whom the Prophet ﷺ gave glad tidings of Paradise. Yet he feared standing before Allah. His humility became even more evident when he asked Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman (RA):

"Did the Messenger of Allah mention my name among the hypocrites?"

Imagine that.

The leader of this Ummah feared hypocrisy. Today, many people openly commit sins yet feel completely safe from Allah's accountability.

One of the greatest signs that self-assessment has disappeared is when a person no longer worries about his relationship with Allah.

4. Evaluating Our Islam

The first step in self-assessment is to evaluate our Islam, our outward submission to Allah.

Islam is not merely a name we carry or an identity we inherit. It is reflected in our daily obedience to Allah's commands.

Ask yourself: Am I faithful to my five daily prayers? Are they offered on time and, whenever possible, in congregation? What is my relationship with the Qur'an? Do I recite it regularly and strive to understand and live by its guidance?

Our assessment should also include our daily conduct. Is my income earned through halal means? Is my speech truthful, kind, and free from backbiting and gossip? Am I fulfilling the rights of my spouse, parents, children, relatives, and neighbors? And beyond my family, am I a source of benefit to my community and to humanity?

Dear brothers and sisters!

The *Sahabah* never measured their religion merely by attending the mosque or claiming to be Muslims. They measured it by obedience. Whenever Allah revealed a command, they submitted without hesitation. That was their standard. If we wish to know where we stand before Allah, we must honestly compare our lives with that standard and strive each day to become better Muslims.

5. Evaluating Our Iman

After evaluating our outward actions, we must examine the condition of our Iman, for faith is not static. It increases through obedience and decreases through sin. A believer should never assume that his faith will remain strong without nurturing it through worship, remembrance, and righteous deeds.

Allah describes the true believers by saying:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ

"The true believers are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned." (Al-Anfal 8:2)

Ask yourself: Does the Qur'an still touch my heart? Do I sincerely regret my sins and hasten to repent? During times of hardship, do I place my trust in Allah, or do I become overwhelmed by fear and anxiety? Is the remembrance of Allah part of my daily life, or do entire days pass without thinking of Him?

The Prophet ﷺ gave us a simple but powerful measure of faith:

مَنْ سَرَّتْهُ حَسَنَتُهُ وَسَاءَتْهُ سَيِّئَتُهُ فَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ

*"Whoever is pleased by his good deeds and saddened by his bad deeds is a believer."
(Musnad Ahmad)*

A living heart rejoices in obedience, feels pain after disobedience, and continually strives to grow closer to Allah. That is the sign of living and increasing Iman.

6. Evaluating Our Ihsan

After examining our Islam and Iman, we must ask ourselves about Ihsan, the highest level of faith. The question is not simply, "Am I praying?" Rather, it is "How am I praying?" Is my heart present before Allah, or am I merely going through the motions?

Allah says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

"He created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deeds." (Al-Mulk 67:2)

Notice that Allah did not say "the most deeds," but "the best deeds." Ihsan is about the quality of our worship. It means performing every act with sincerity, excellence, and the constant awareness that Allah is watching us. Ask yourself: Would I still perform this good deed if no one knew about it? Is my heart present in Salah? Am I striving to improve my worship and character each day?

A beautiful example of Ihsan is found in the story of Sayyiduna Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) and the shepherd. When Umar suggested that the shepherd secretly sell him a sheep and tell his owner that a wolf had taken it, the shepherd replied, "فَأَيْنَ اللَّهُ؟" *"Then where is Allah?"* That simple response reflected a heart that lived in *Muraqabah*, always conscious that Allah sees everything. This is the true essence of Ihsan.

7. Diseases Revealed Through Self-Assessment

Honest self-assessment does more than reveal our strengths; it also exposes the diseases hidden within our hearts. Just as a doctor cannot prescribe the proper treatment without first diagnosing the illness, a believer cannot purify his soul until he recognizes its spiritual diseases. Among the most common are arrogance, envy, love of worldly wealth and status, uncontrolled anger, showing off, and heedlessness of Allah.

One of the greatest signs of a healthy heart is how seriously a person views his own sins. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (RA) said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يَرَى ذُنُوبَهُ كَأَنَّهُ قَاعِدٌ تَحْتَ جَبَلٍ يَخَافُ أَنْ يَقَعَ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنَّ الْفَاجِرَ يَرَى ذُنُوبَهُ كَذُبَابٍ مَرَّ عَلَى أَنْفِهِ فَقَالَ بِهِ هَكَذَا.

"The believer sees his sins as though he is sitting beneath a mountain, fearing that it may fall upon him. But the wicked person sees his sins like a fly that lands on his nose, and he simply brushes it away."(Bukhari: 6308)

Ask yourself: How seriously do I take my sins? Do I make excuses for them, or do they lead me to sincere repentance and change? A heart that feels pain after disobedience is alive, while a heart that becomes comfortable with sin is in great spiritual danger. Recognizing our faults is not a sign of weakness; it is the first step toward purification and closeness to Allah.

8. The Daily Mahasabha of the Righteous

Self-assessment was not an occasional practice of the righteous. It was part of their daily routine. They understood that just as the body needs regular care, the heart also needs constant examination. Hasan al-Basri(RA) beautifully said:

لَا يَزَالُ الْمُؤْمِنُ بِخَيْرٍ مَا كَانَ لَهُ وَاعِظٌ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ، وَكَانَتْ الْمُحَاسَبَةُ مِنْ هِمَّتِهِ.

"A believer continues to remain upon goodness so long as he is his own advisor and self-accountability remains one of his constant concerns."(Hilyat al-Awliya')

Like a successful merchant who reviews his profits and losses every evening, a believer should review the condition of his soul. Before going to bed, ask yourself: What good did I do today? What sins did I commit? Did I help anyone or hurt anyone? Did I remember Allah throughout the day? Am I closer to Allah today than I was yesterday? These few moments of sincere reflection can transform our character, strengthen our relationship with Allah, and help us become better Muslims every single day.

9. Building a Practical Ihsan Scorecard

Dear brothers and sisters!

Self-assessment becomes effective only when it is practiced consistently. Set aside one day each week to evaluate yourself honestly. Review your Islam by examining your Salah, relationship with the Qur'an, halal earnings, family responsibilities, and service to the community. Then assess your Iman by asking whether your trust in Allah, love for Him, gratitude, repentance, and fear of Him are increasing. Finally, evaluate your Ihsan by reflecting on your sincerity, humility, awareness that Allah is always watching, and your efforts to serve His creation with excellence.

The purpose of this exercise is not to compare ourselves with others or become discouraged by our shortcomings. Rather, it is to identify where improvement is needed and to take practical steps toward becoming better servants of Allah. Every sincere effort to improve, no matter how small, is beloved to Allah and brings us one step closer to the station of Ihsan.

Conclusion:

Dear brothers and sisters!

Before we leave this masjid today, let each of us ask three questions that no one else can answer for us. How is my Islam? How is my Iman? How is my Ihsan? One day, we will stand alone before Allah. Our wealth, our titles, our followers, and our reputation will not speak on our behalf. Only our faith, sincerity, and righteous deeds will accompany us into the grave and before the Lord of the worlds.

Remember that the journey to Allah begins with awakening. It continues through honest self-assessment, sincere repentance, and consistent effort. Allah does not expect perfection from us, but He loves those who constantly return to Him, strive to improve, and never lose hope in His mercy. Every prayer offered with more humility, every sin abandoned, every tear shed in repentance, and every act of kindness done sincerely brings us closer to the station of Ihsan.

May Allah make us among those who constantly examine their souls before they are examined on the Day of Judgment. May He strengthen our Islam, increase our Iman, beautify our worship with Ihsan, purify our hearts from arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, and heedlessness, grant us sincere repentance, and include us among His righteous servants and beloved Muhsinin. Amin.