

## What Are the Ways to Attain Piety and What Precautions are Needed to Become Pious?

### What Are the Ways to Attain Piety; Can One Become Pious Overnight?

Each of us has likely heard the term "piety" (*taqwa*) many times in our lives. Even if we don't consider ourselves particularly pious, we are aware of its high importance and the many rewards mentioned for the pious. But what are the actual ways to attain piety?

Is it possible to become a pious and virtuous person by doing just a few things?

Is the path to piety only through complex spiritual journeys, or can everyone achieve it?

It is worth revisiting the definition and meaning of piety and note that the ways to attain piety do not necessarily guarantee that we will become completely pious; this largely depends on the nature of attaining piety itself.

In our lives, we encounter situations where the results are immediate; for example, by writing appropriate answers in an exam, we achieve a good grade, or by following a recipe precisely, we end up with a delicious meal. However, we cannot apply this certainty to understanding something; just because we read a text does not mean we have understood it.

Becoming pious is also not limited to following a few instructions; in fact, it is a process that requires our constant care and attention. In this article, we aim to

identify the ways to attain piety and also highlight the factors that, if neglected, can disrupt our piety.

### **Piety Means Protection**

As we mentioned in previous lessons, piety means being careful to avoid harm. Naturally, this care has a special definition for us as humans, who are the noblest creations of God, and it becomes meaningful in the context of our journey toward the purpose that God has defined for our lives and creation. If we consider our purpose to be resembling Allah and reaching the Absolute Infinite, we can say that piety means staying away from obstacles that hinder our resemblance to Allah and prevent our healthy birth to the hereafter. These obstacles can include not having the necessary nourishment to resemble Allah and factors that halt or slow our movement toward the Infinite Existence.

Thus, in our journey to become pious and protect ourselves, we must not only acquire everything necessary for resembling Allah from the world but also avoid any actions that hinder our journey to the Absolute Infinity, disrupt our happiness and peace, and prevent our healthy birth to the hereafter. If we succeed in this process, we can claim to have attained piety.

Piety is what guarantees our eternal happiness. Just as a seed needs to receive the right nourishment from the soil to become a tree, we can only claim piety and self-protection when we step onto the path of acquiring the names and attributes of God while adhering to the proper measures. Just as having extra limbs or fingers is not considered a virtue for a fetus, acquiring excess and out-of-measure things in this world will also cause us trouble.

However, merely acquiring nourishment is not enough; we also need to avoid pests and obstacles to reach our destination. Just as a seed that has sprouted from the soil faces threats on its way to its ultimate purpose, becoming a tree, and requires the gardener's care, we too need to be cautious and avoid factors that hinder our healthy transition to the hereafter and disrupt our resemblance to Allah. The difference is that we humans have free choice, and, unlike seeds and plants, we are responsible for protecting ourselves from the pests and threats that arise in our path.

### **Piety; According to Each Individual's Status**

With this in mind, piety varies according to each individual's circumstances and status. Naturally, anyone who is at a higher level in their journey toward their purpose of creation and desires a closer resemblance to Allah will require more piety and protection. For instance, an action that is considered pious for one person may be seen as impious for another. Consider a person who has a habit of using inappropriate language and is trying to quit this bad behavior; for such a person, even using one less curse word a day is considered an act of piety, while for someone who does not struggle with this issue, using even one inappropriate word is impious. This is because that one word, while helping the first person remove obstacles and get closer to their purpose of creation, serves as a barrier for the second person in achieving resemblance and a healthy birth to the hereafter.

### **Avoiding Harms**

Just as providing proper nourishment for growth and reaching Allah and maintaining our relationship with Him and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (Peace be upon them) is essential, avoiding conditions that hinder our progress is also important. Otherwise, despite moving toward our destination, we may suffer harm and effectively waste all our efforts.

In fact, by practicing piety, we strive to distance ourselves from anything that could lead us to hell and avoid factors that cause to our spiritual constriction or impose pressure on others. In simpler terms, we try to ensure that our actions, interactions, and behaviors do not cause hardship or suffering for others. Therefore, we consider it essential to adhere to a set of principles, as these constitute the ways to attain piety:

- **Avoiding Transgression and Intrusion**

Transgressing and violating the rights of others, known as "*hagl-nas*," involves various forms of infringement, and steering clear of these actions is seen as a way to achieve piety. We cannot claim to be moving toward healthy birth while ignoring the boundaries of others; For example, listening in on conversations without permission, entering someone's home or personal space when they don't want us to, or asking too many personal questions to pry into their lives are all ways we can infringe on others' rights. Even if some of these behaviors seem common among certain people, they still disrespect the rights of others through our ears, eyes, and words and accordingly, we move away from resembling Allah.

- **Managing Speech**

A person who is on the path to their essence is careful about their relationship with Allah and their heavenly family. They avoid any actions that could harm this

relationship. Therefore, they do not view their speech as just a normal function but consider all the potential consequences and damages that may arise from it. They do not engage in arguments or disputes with others and maintain fairness in their interactions, not seeking to absolve themselves of mistakes. For such a person, gossip, slander, mockery, or speaking ill of others is not trivial behavior but a deviation from the straight path that leads them to their purpose.

- Avoiding Worldly Attachment

The world acts as a limiting factor against our desire and effort to reach infinity and the Absolute Perfection. While we are permitted to use worldly resources to the best of our ability on our journey toward eternity and resembling Allah, as a good and efficient tool can expedite our journey, the key point is that the world should serve as a means to achieve our goal. Worldly attachment and the use of the world are two entirely different matters; one can hinder our attainment of piety, while the other, if used correctly, can be considered one of the ways to attain piety and lead to our healthy birth to the hereafter.

Although each of the mentioned points is highly significant in the pursuit of piety, the ways to attain piety are not limited to these aspects. Anything that serves as nourishment on our path to resembling Allah or plays a role in removing obstacles in our journey toward that resemblance and healthy birth is included.