



How Islam

Deals with
Disasters
and Pandemics

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most
Merciful, the Most Gracious

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How Islam

Deals with Disasters and Pandemics

Earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, diseases and viruses have become far too common, especially since the start of the 20th century. So what is the explanation behind such occurrences? Furthermore, what measures can we take in-order to deal with such tragedies?





Do Tragedies Happen?

Islam informs us that there are three reasons behind why tragedies occur:

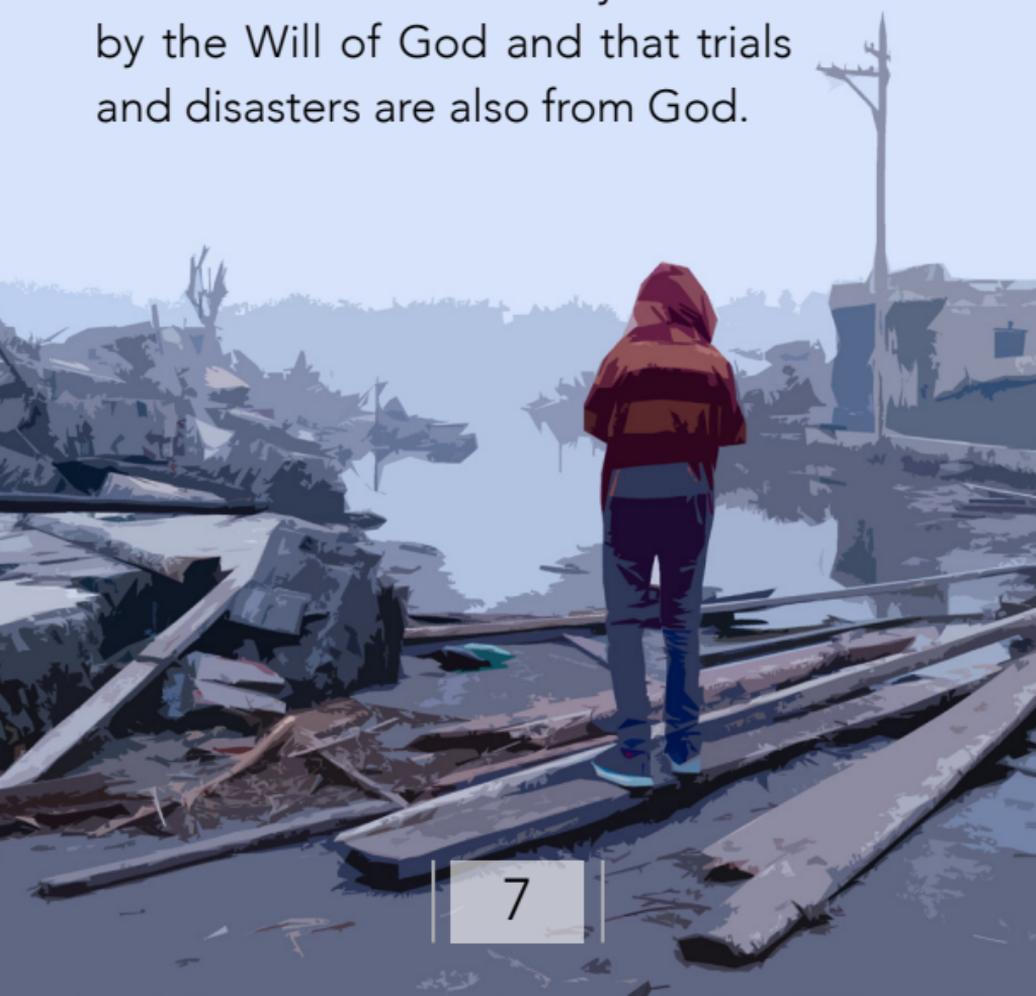
1. God is raising the position of His servants in Paradise by putting them through trials and hardships. Muslims see this life merely as a journey to the Hereafter, which



has an everlasting abode in either a place of ultimate bliss or ultimate sadness. No human will enter Paradise except by the grace and mercy of God; yet one's rank in Paradise will be determined by how much good they did in life as well as how patient they were at times of hardship. The most tested people were undoubtedly the Prophets, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, may the blessings of God be upon them all. Muhammad was expelled by his own people from his city and when they failed to kill him, they waged war against him and his followers; also Muhammad's wife Khadeeja passed away as did his only two young sons, at the most critical times in his life.

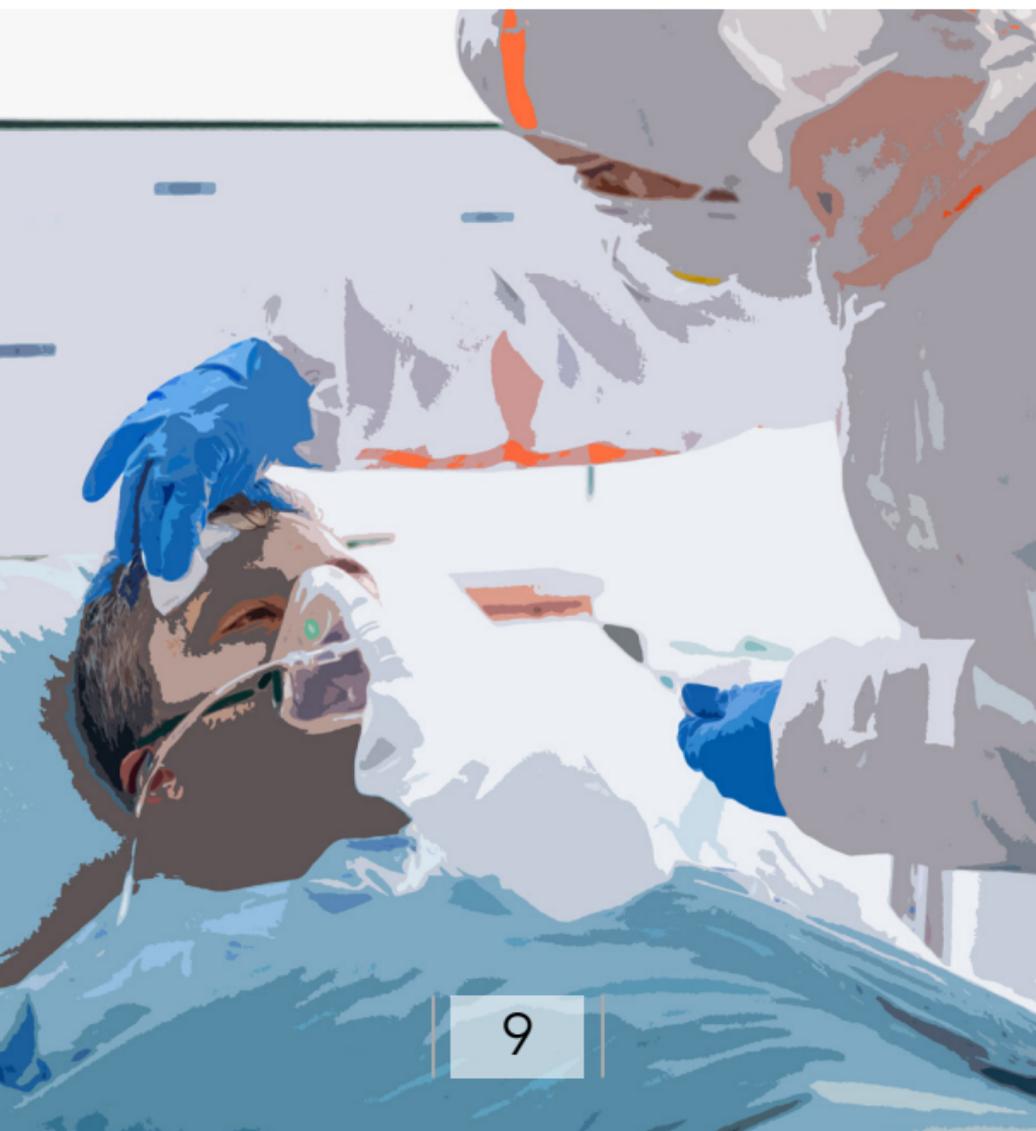
The Prophet said, “If God wants to do good to somebody, He afflicts him with trials.” (Al Bukhari, Book # 70, Hadith # 548).

A believer understands that God created and controls the forces of nature, that all occurrences in this life aren't coincidences yet occur by the Will of God and that trials and disasters are also from God.



God mentions in the Qur'an (2:155-157), "We will surely test you with something of fear, famine, and loss of property, life, and fruits. So give glad tidings to those who endure patiently. They are those when afflicted with a disaster, they say, "We indeed belong to God, and to Him indeed we will return." They are the ones upon whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord. And they are those who are [truly] guided." Hence when afflicted by hardship one should be patient, until whatever God wills to happen occurs. Knowing that God wanted to test someone helps them become calm and more capable of rational thinking and suitable actions at time of disaster. A believer who is patient in the way that pleases God will receive a lofty reward that awaits him/her in the Hereafter. If it is God's Will that someone should

succumb to a certain plague, virus or such then likewise a generous reward awaits him/her, as mentioned by The Prophet mentioned, **“He who dies of an abdominal disease is a martyr, and he who dies of plague is a martyr.”** (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 629).



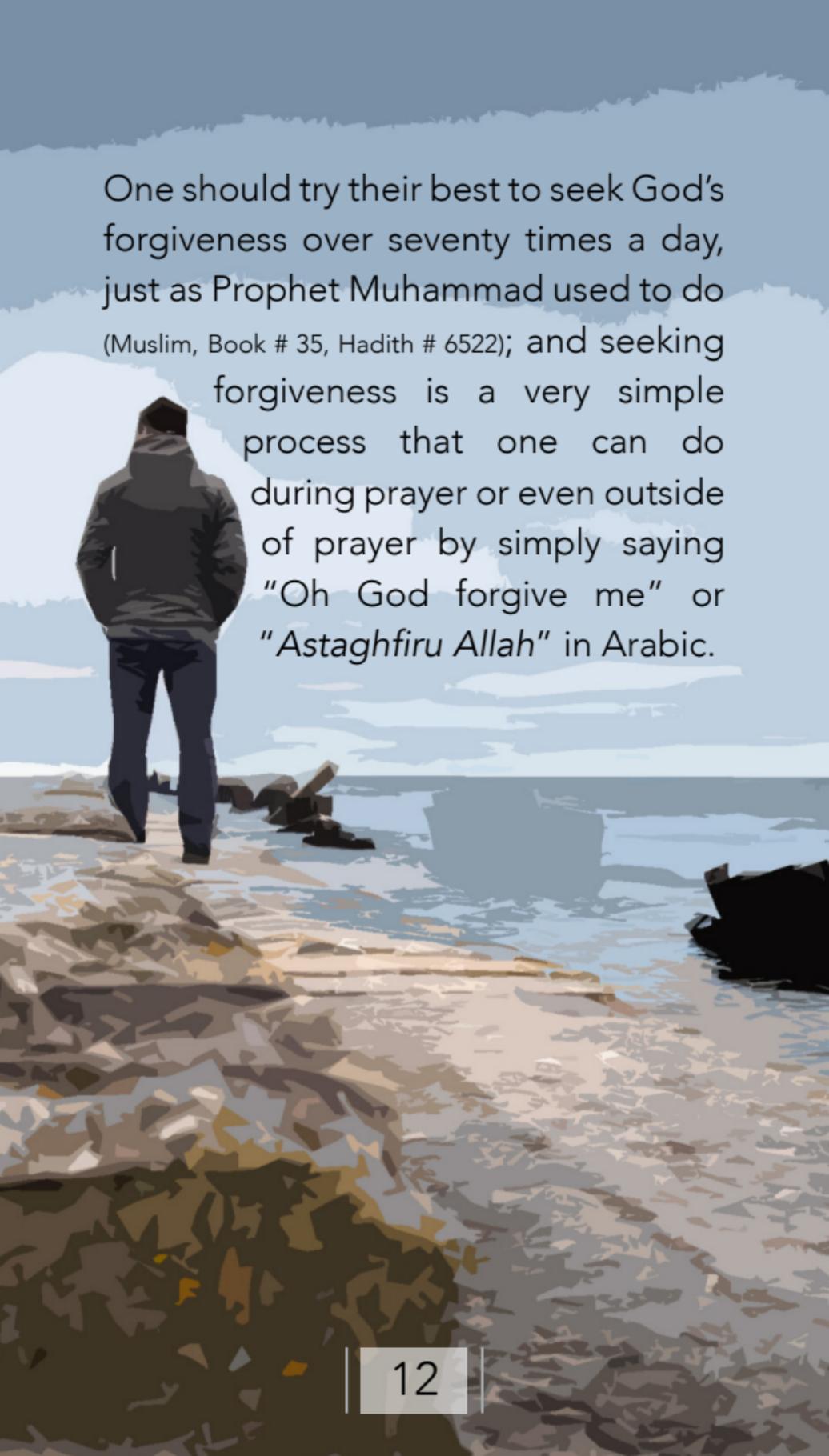
2. The second reason is that God is cleansing believers from their sins. Islam informs us that every person makes mistakes and sins, however, one should always turn to God Alone for forgiveness after sinning. From God's mercy with His believing servants is that He may choose to cleanse someone for his/her wrong actions in this life rather than in the Hereafter (which would be far worse). This act of cleansing happens through all sorts of hardships in life.



Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said,

“No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that God expiates some of his sins for that.” (Al Bukhari, Book # 70, Hadith # 545) and, **“Affliction will continue to trouble the believers, men and women, in their bodies, their families, and their property until they meet Allah Almighty purified of every wrong action.”** (Tirmidhi, Book # 29, Hadith # 494).

Yet the wiser option is that people become more conscious of God and continuously turn to God in repentance and seeking His forgiveness; and God’s Kindness and Forgiveness is limitless. His Beautiful Names include the Most Merciful, the All-Forgiving.

A person wearing a dark hooded jacket and dark pants stands with their back to the camera on a rocky, uneven shore. They are looking out over a calm body of water towards a distant horizon under a clear blue sky. The foreground is dominated by large, textured rocks in shades of brown and grey. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter, clear blue. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

One should try their best to seek God's forgiveness over seventy times a day, just as Prophet Muhammad used to do (Muslim, Book # 35, Hadith # 6522); and seeking forgiveness is a very simple process that one can do during prayer or even outside of prayer by simply saying "Oh God forgive me" or "*Astaghfiru Allah*" in Arabic.



3. Tragedies are a result of the repetitive sins people commit; especially major sins that do not please God. The Qur'an (13:31) says, "And disasters will continue to afflict the disbelievers or strike close to their homes for their misdeeds, until the promise of God comes to pass. Indeed, God never fails in His promise." and, "Corruption has spread on land and sea because of what people's hands have done, so that He may cause them to taste some of they did that they may return [from evil]." (Qur'an 30:41).

Hence tragedies can clearly be punishments from God because of the sins of mankind, also as a reminder that one needs to turn to God in repentance and cease doing what angers their Lord. During times of hardship, one feels their total weakness in-front of God and should be more likely to mend their ways and review their relationship with their Lord. It is also a reminder that there is far greater punishment in the Hereafter for whoever disbelieves in God and/or is indulged in major sins without repentance.

On the contrary, had all humankind believed in God and all His Prophets there would be no natural disasters, instead more blessings would have come in the form of suitable rainfall, fruits, vegetables and crops as mentioned in, **“And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared**

God, We (God), would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth.” (Qur’an 7:96)



Tips

to Prevent the Spread of Viruses

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has taken the entire world by surprise, it is worth noting that Islam, the religion of mercy, long ago mentioned valuable tips that medical science would later confirm help prevent the spread of illnesses, plagues and viruses, including:





- 1. Washing Hands.** Islam strongly recommends the washing of hands. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, **“Wash your hands after you wake up; you do not know where your hands have moved while you sleep.”** (Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 541). In addition to after waking up

Muslims also wash their hands during an act known as “wudu” - an act of cleaning various parts of the body starting off with washing each hand three times - that is a prerequisite to performing the five daily prayers. Furthermore, the Prophet told us that when washing we should make sure to wash in-between the finger joints (Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 502), which medically speaking is essential in-order to kill germs.



2. Cleanliness. The importance of cleanliness can be emphasized in the saying of the Prophet that, **“Cleanliness is half of faith.”** (Muslim, Book#2, Hadith#432). Cleanliness is of so much importance that many acts of worship can’t be performed until one becomes in a clean state. A Muslim can’t pray, hold the Qur’an nor perform Hajj, until they perform wudu which includes the washing of the

hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, head, ears and feet. Likewise after sexual intercourse a Muslim must take a shower before he/she can carry out certain acts of worship.

It is also highly recommended to take a complete shower before attending the weekly Friday prayer at a mosque. A well-known saying of the Prophet goes even further and tells us of ten acts of cleanliness that one should implement for their own well-being, including snuffing water in the nose, cutting the nails, removing armpit hair, shaving pubic hair and cleaning one's backside with water after answering the call of nature.

Furthermore, even the using of a "miswak", a tree twig used for cleaning teeth, which is equivalent to present day brush and toothpaste, is

something that is recommended and liked by God. (Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 502). The Qur'an (2:222) mentions, **"Indeed, God loves those who repent and loves those who keep themselves pure."** Implementing the above-mentioned points helps one stay clean and hence less prone to illness.





3. **Drinking and Eating Guidelines:**

The Prophet forbade people from breathing into a vessel or cup while drinking from it.” (Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 534) and forbade the drinking of water directly from the mouth of a water skin (Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 532). Not breathing into a cup and not drinking from the same cup with someone else are two universal acts of hygiene that

help prevent the transmission of disease. Islam also tells us to cover food and drinks when we go to sleep (Al Bukhari, Book # 69, Hadith # 528) and forbade people from urinating in still water (Muslim, Book # 2, Hadith # 553). Finally, Islam dislikes the act of overeating; an act that can cause over a dozen medical conditions; the Prophet mentioned, **“The food for two persons is sufficient for three, and the food of three persons is sufficient for four persons.”** (Al Bukhari, Book # 65, Hadith # 304).

4. Cleaning of Clothes: The Prophet used to clean his clothes with his very own hands and Islam informs us that God likes to see His servant dress well. The Qur'an (74:4) mentions, "And purify your clothes".





- 5. Covering One's Sneeze:** It is narrated that, "When the Prophet sneezed, he used to place his hand or a garment on his mouth, to lessen the noise." (Abu Dawoud, Book # 41, Hadith # 5011); an act that is strongly recommended at times of infection in-order to prevent the spread of germs to others.



6. Social Distancing: Remarkably, over fourteen centuries ago the Prophet mentioned the following, “If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place.” (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 624) and, “If you hear that it (plague) has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it.” (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 626). Experts strongly advise at times of outbreaks that no one leaves their homes and that no one travels to other locations.



Measures

When Infected by a Virus

Likewise Islam teaches us remedies that can help fight off any illness or virus, including:



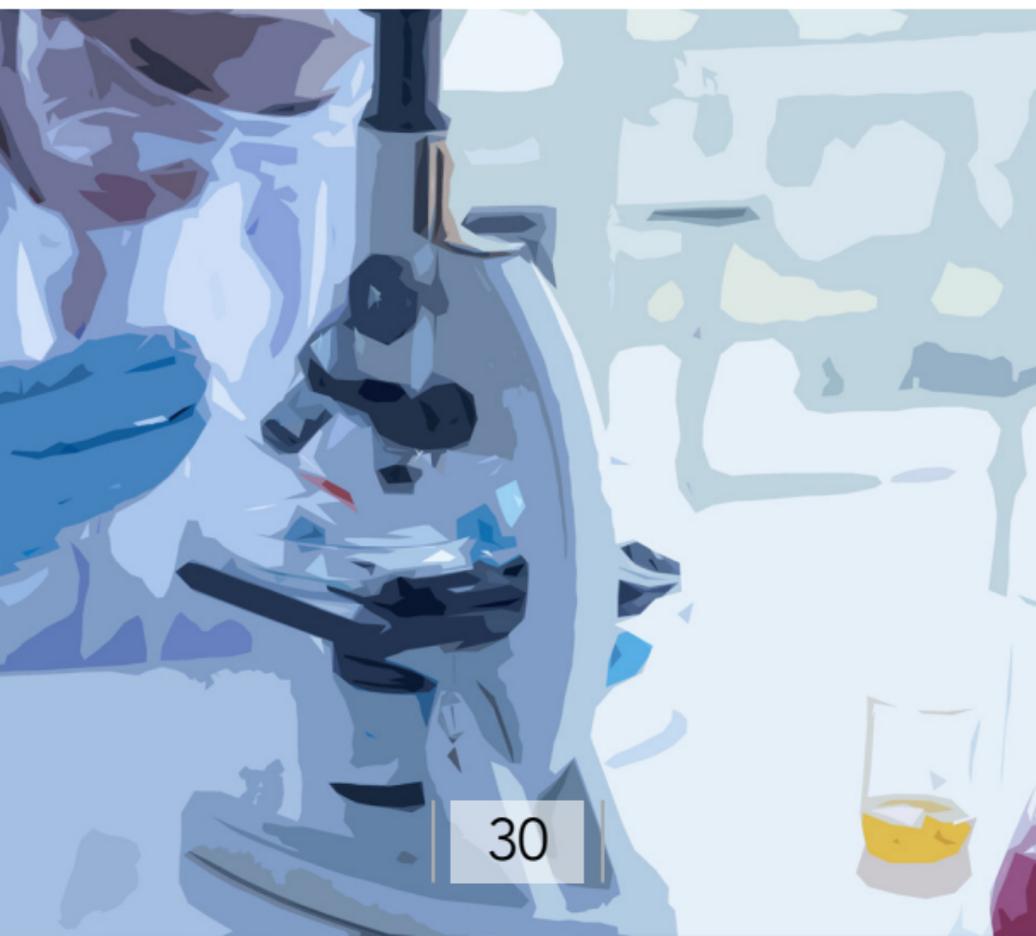
1. Medical Treatment. The Prophet would encourage his followers to seek medical treatment and told them to use water while dealing with fever; **“God’s Messenger used to order us to abate fever with water.”** (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 620). He even used to have cupping therapy applied on himself (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 595).



2. Seeking a Cure. It is up to us to strive and find a cure for all illnesses; for the Prophet mentioned, "There is no disease that God has created, except that He also has created its treatment." (Al Bukhari, Book # 71, Hadith # 582) and, "God has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful." (Abu Dawoud, Book # 28, Hadith # 3865). Also as narrated by Usamah ibn Sharik: "I came to the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him and his Companions were sitting as if they had birds on their heads [figuratively speaking, due to how attentive they were]. I saluted and sat down. The desert

Arabs then came from here and there. They asked: Messenger of God, should we make use of medical treatment? He replied: Make use of medical treatment, for God has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely very old age."

(Abu Dawoud, Book # 28, Hadith # 3846).



3. Giving Charity. This might come as a surprise, however, at times of dire need one should turn to God with acts that please Him; and giving to the poor and needy for the sake of seeking God's pleasure is an act that pleases the Lord and brings one closer to His Mercy.





4. Dependence on God. After taking all necessary medical treatment one should be dependent on God with their heart. A believer knows that God is the Creator of everything big and small, and although He has given a reason for everything, in the end He is in control of everything. The Qur'an (65:3) mentions that, "... **whoever, relies on God – then He is sufficient for him.**" A fine example is our father Abraham who when he would fall ill would seek suitable medical treatment then confidently tell his people, "**And when I am ill, it is He (God) Who cures me.**" (Qur'an 26:80).

5. Remaining Positive. Staying calm and positive and thinking that, God willing, one will get through their illness is of extreme importance; in-fact it is part of the psychological treatment that helps one's immune system do its work in the correct fashion. Feeling negative and pessimistic on the contrary weakens one's immune system. The Prophet said, "There is ... no "tiyarah" (superstitious beliefs in omens), but I like good mention." They said: What is a good mention?" He said: "An optimistic word." (Muslim, Book # 26, Hadith # 5520). So a patient should remain positive and for example say, "I hope to be better by the weekend and back at to work soon."



6. The Secret Weapon: Prayer. This is an extremely effective weapon to fight off any illness. The Qur'an (40:60) mentions, "And your Lord said, "Call upon Me (God); I will respond to you...". A well-known hadith narrated by 'Aisha states: "Whenever God's Messenger paid a visit to a patient, or a patient was brought to him, he used to invoke God, saying, 'Take away the disease, O the Lord of the people! Cure him as You are the One Who

cures. There is no cure but Yours, a cure that leaves no disease.”

(Al Bukhari, Book # 70, Hadith # 579). God likes it when His servants turn to Him in prayer at time of calamity and weakness and aren't arrogant to raise their hands in the air and ask Him to bestow His Mercy and cure them. God's promise is true and He answers the callers of whoever calls Him. Finally the Dear Prophet told us that, **“nothing averts the Divine Decree except for supplication”**

(Ibn Majah, Book # 1, Hadith # 90) meaning that if something bad was going to occur and someone asked God for protection from all harm and God answered his/her prayer then that bad thing will not occur; likewise, if someone is sick and asks God to be cured God willing they will be cured.

Eventually, this global pandemic will subside - as do all hardships in this world - and life will start returning to normal again. Let's all relook at our relationship with our Lord, and ask ourselves how we can get closer to Him. **"O God, I seek refuge in You from the withdrawal of Your blessing and the decline of the good health you have given..."** (Muslim, Book # 49, Hadith # 08). God bless and protect you all.

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