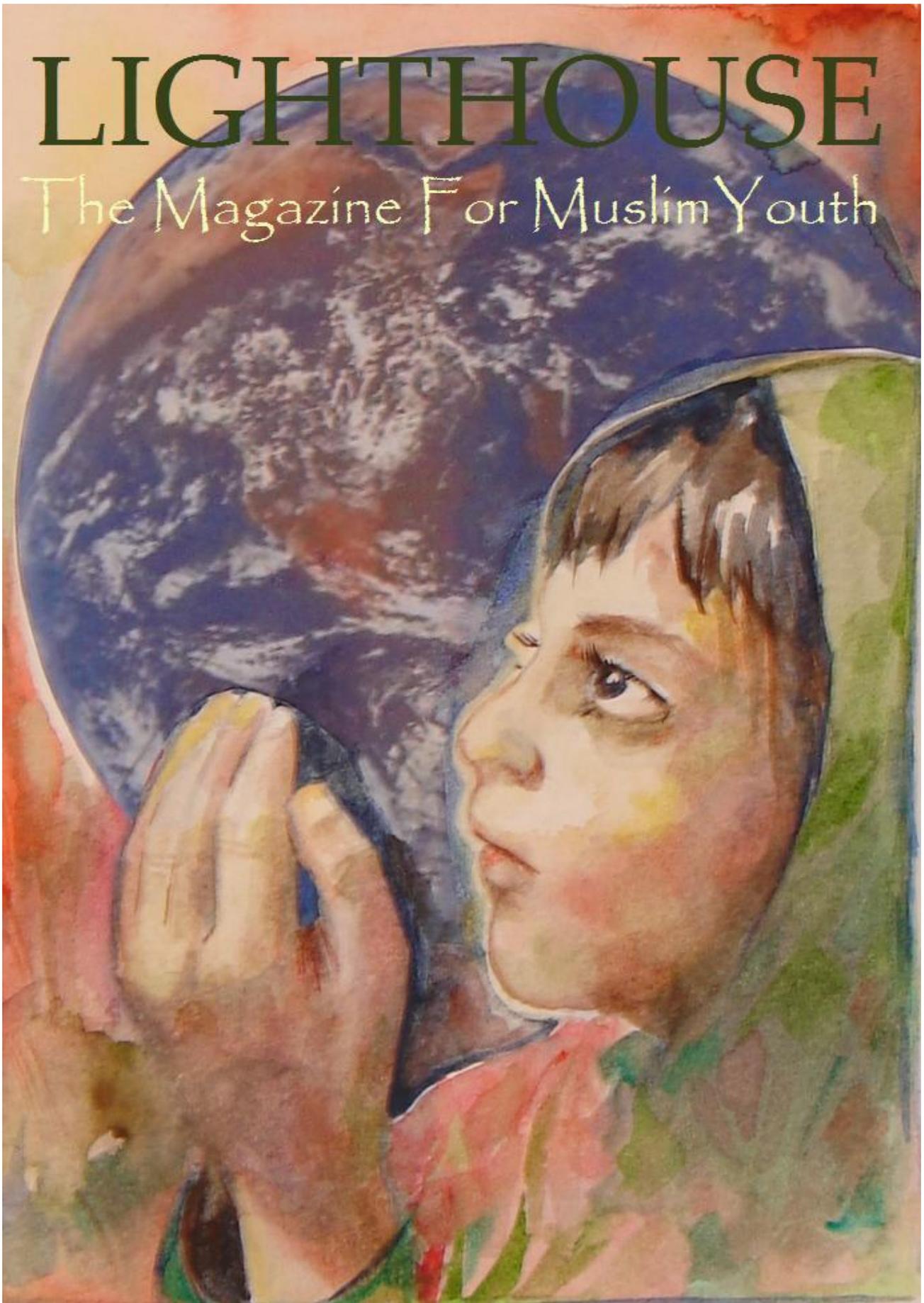


LIGHTHOUSE

The Magazine For Muslim Youth



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ISLAM TEACHES US TO THINK POSITIVE

“Surely none despairs of Allah’s mercy except the disbelieving people.”

Chapter 12 Verse 87

“Surely with difficulty is ease

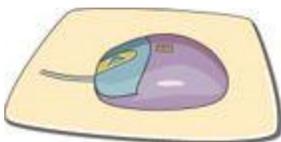
With difficulty is surely ease.”

Chapter 94 Verses 5 and 6.

As we live our daily lives, Islam guides us every step of the way. We all know that before we do something we usually think about it. Our mind is full of different thoughts throughout the day. When we are about to do something, e.g. take a test, we already have some ideas or expectations about how it will turn out, whether we will do well or not, and those thoughts affect our performance on the test. If we listen to the negative thoughts, the ones that tell us that we will not do well and we are not as smart as others, it is likely that we will be so nervous and upset that we will not do our best. If we try to chase the negative or weak thoughts away, we can listen to and encourage the positive or strong thoughts. These thoughts say “I can do well and with Allah’s help I will do well. Being nervous is normal, but I did my homework and paid attention in class so I can ace this test.”



Replacing weak, negative thoughts with strong, positive thoughts help us calm down when we are upset or worried. They give us hope and remind us that we are not alone in whatever we have to do. To begin with Allah gave us an amazing body and brain far better than computers and machines, because our brains invented



computers and other machines. Allah also gave us guidance to take care of our body and mind and our soul so that we can tell the difference between right and wrong. Allah gave us the gift of prayer, He is close to us and listens to our prayers and answers them. Allah tells us in the Quran that those who believe in Him do not

despair, or think that there is no hope. They try to keep up hope and remember that with Allah, all things are possible.



It is the job of Shaitan to try to keep us away from Allah and from all that is good. That is why we often notice that our minds may be filled with more negative thoughts than positive.

The good thing is that we can control our own thoughts and remember that Allah is always with us and helping us.

If a boy who knew that the president of his country was his good friend and would always help him, that boy would be very hopeful and optimistic about his life.

Allah is much more powerful than a president or king, so when we become friends with Allah, we have good reason to think strong, positive thoughts and hope for wonderful things.

BEING THANKFUL IS THE BEST ROAD TO POSITIVE THINKING



There is a very sweet and short prayer of our Holy Prophet (PBUH) which is: "All praise is due to Allah in all circumstances."

This prayer teaches us to think positively, knowing that Allah who is our Friend is always there when we need Him. We should never feel helpless or dejected because we know that Allah will always help. It teaches us to look for what is working and what we can still be thankful for when we did not get what we wanted, or when something bad happens.

As we stand for each prayer, we say the words "*Alhamdulillah hi rabbil aalameen*" which mean "all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds". Since we are meant to offer our five daily prayers as a heartfelt talk with Allah, not just a ritual to perform, it is important that we feel grateful as we say those words. It helps us to put our troubles in perspective and realize that many people are in much worse situations and have to struggle to get the basic necessities of life that we take for granted.

A kid who gets the flu and had to stay home the day of the field trip to the water park, can realize if he thinks positively that he is still blessed to have good health most days of his life, lucky to have parents to take care of him, a home to rest in, and good food and medicine to help him get better. He begins to think that even though he is upset about missing a trip that he was looking forward to, there are still so many good things going on that he can be thankful for and feel good about.



Let's all think about the little things that bother us every day and try to see them in a different way. When we grumble about little things, they seem to get even bigger. When we realize that everyone's life does have some problems, we can deal with them without making mountains out of molehills.

ROZINA CLEANS UP

Dear Dad,

Assalam alaykum. You won't believe this! Mom will not help me clean up my room! She says it's my job and I have to get it done. She has given me a week. A WEEK! Imagine that .This room needs a month at least. Do you know how all this started?



Yesterday I did not have any clean pants to wear to school. As usual I called Mom to help, and that, Dad, was my big mistake. It was too early and Mom had not had her two cups of Lipton tea. She came right in and started screaming. Turns out she had stepped on my push pin collection. You might wonder why it was on the floor? Well I was looking for the one with the biggest point to pin your picture to the wall and ... Mom found it and I have a feeling she is not giving it back. (I will look for some sticky tape under my candy wrapper collection.) Anyway, Mom decided that it was not OK for me to keep my room as messy as I wanted even if the door was always closed. I told her you had said that I could.

She said, "What was your father thinking?" in a tone that would have given you chills down your spine. I think you had better send some flowers for her. (Please remember that roses make her sneeze.)

Well Dad, you will be proud to hear that I did not talk back to her. I just nodded my head and then I ran for the bathroom and stayed there till it was all quiet outside. I wore my pajamas to school today and said it was Pajama Day. It wasn't a lie, Dad, don't you get upset. I know how picky you are about telling the truth. It was Pajama Day for me, wasn't it, and it will continue to be Pajama Day for me 'till I put all my pants in the laundry basket and ask my kind mother to wash them'. That is what Mom said while she put a band-aid on her foot.



Now how do I clean up my room? Mom gave me a plan, which I had expected. You know how she always has a plan. It was a list taped to my door when I got

back from school. It said:

Wrappers belong in the trash

Pencils belong on your desk

Laundry belongs in the hamper

Books belong on the bookshelf.

What she didn't mention was: where does my collection of 'Mom notes' belong? I have notes back from when I couldn't even read, yet she gave me those notes:

'Diapers belong in the trash' and it has a picture of a diaper on it. It makes me wonder if she even made me change my own diapers?

'Dirty worms belong outside.'

'Pooh and Piglet belong in the toy box.'

I can't believe you let me play with Piglet, Dad! That was not appropriate for a Muslim child. All my early photos have me chewing on that little piggy! Now I can hear you saying that Muslims are not forbidden to chew on piggy shaped toys.

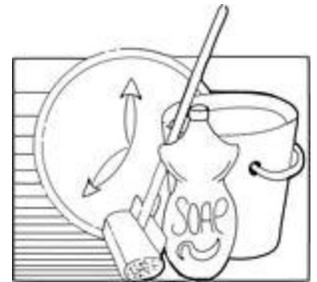


They are only forbidden from eating the meat of a pig. You are right, but it is not good for my image.

I should get started on my homework now.

I love you and miss you very much. I know part of the reason Mom is being so strict is that she misses you. She gives me extra hugs these days.

Love, Rozina



Dear Dad,

Assalam alaykum,

You won't believe how my room looks right now. It looks like two people are living here: clean cat and dirty dog. About half my room is super clean and the other is even messier than before. I know you are thinking that I am just dumping stuff from one part of the room to the other, but that is not true. It's just that while cleaning up and organizing all my collections, things got messier than before. Mom is helping a little because she is collecting some things for a refugee family from Afghanistan that she is working with. She keeps asking me if she can take some things for the kids. I would not let her take much of anything because everything belonged to a collection that I was making. At least, that is what I told Mom. The truth is, Dad, that I just don't like giving my things away. It seems as if everything I have is precious and I might need it at any time.

Even though I did not tell Mom this, I think she knew because of what I found taped to my door the next morning. It was one of her notes, that said:

“When we need something, Allah gives it to us. If we share what we have and give away something to someone who needs it, we can be sure that, if and when we need it again, Allah will be sure to bless us again.”



As you can see this was one of the longer of mom's notes. I am glad she did not just write:

“Your things belong in the refugee family's new apartment.”

I am thinking about what the note said and it does make sense. After all, when I was born, all my stuff did not come with me. Allah gave me everything, the things I needed and the things I wanted. Some of the things I saved up for and waited for, but even so Allah was the One who inspired me to save up and helped me to buy them. This is a difficult thought in my mind. Each time I look at my room overflowing with things I realize that most are not useful anymore. Maybe the kids in the refugee family only have a bed in their room and nothing else. I would

probably not miss many of my books and “collections” if they were gone and my room would look a lot cleaner. Right now the average search time for anything is about seven minutes.

This is a long letter. I will finish now and please write back soon.

Lots of love

Rozina.

Dear Dad,

Assalam alaykum. You will not believe what has happened. Part of me wanted to give you a surprise and the other part thought it might be a shock for you to come home and find my room completely changed. Last week I went with Mom to visit the refugee family. She needed someone to help her carry all the stuff she was taking them. You will not believe our crawl space when you see it. You know how Mom is about sales and how she likes to stock up on things. Well, she still loves sales but now she has a whole list of people to get things for, mostly new families she is helping get settled. So here I was all bundled up on a Saturday morning, loading towels and bed sheets in the back of our car. What I really wanted to do was get my own room cleaned, but Mom seemed like she could use an extra pair of hands.



The Khan family is so sweet. The father is missing one leg when he stepped on a landmine in Afghanistan but he moves so quickly with crutches you wouldn't even notice. The mother has such sad eyes but a crinkly, smiley face. She hugged me and Mom about seven times each. There are 2 small boys about 3 and 6 and an older girl who looked a bit younger than me, but she might just be shorter and thinner. They spoke a little Urdu and almost no English, except for yes and no. The boys kept saying yes and no and then giggling as if it were a huge joke. The girl,

Zubayda, quickly brought a tray of tea and cookies for us as the parents helped us unload.

The apartment has just one bedroom so they are all in there. They had cushions to sit on and comforters to sleep on, no beds or furniture so far, except for a few rickety tables, but they seemed very happy. I wanted to ask Zubayda how she could stand sharing a room with two little brothers, but I didn't know how to make her understand. She kept smiling shyly at me and running here and there to help her parents or her brother. She acted more like a mother to her brothers than an older sister who would be bothered by them. While Mom talked to the parents in Urdu I wished I had brought along some books to read to the kids. I only saw one book in that apartment and it was wrapped in cloth high on a shelf, probably the Quran. I kept thinking of my own room with books spilling off the two bookshelves, books on the floor, in the closet and I suddenly knew exactly



how to clean my room.

I will spare you the details, Dad, but now I have one less bookshelf in my room. I hope the Khan boys enjoy reading those books as they learn English. I can always bike to the library whenever I like, to get new books. We are so lucky to have a huge library right by us. I will be visiting the family on

Saturdays and teaching the kids for an hour. I was getting old for my scarf and hair accessory collection, plus the bead sets and puzzles really needed to go. Of course I am too old for stuffed animals, but the Khan boys seemed to fall in love with them instantly. Same for the board games I used to love and the art sets I outgrew. You can see the floor in my room now and mom actually hummed as she helped me vacuum and dust around. She made me some pretty curtains from her old shawl and left them on my bed with, of course, a note.

It said:

“May everyone have a good collection for Jannah, like my daughter Rozina.”

Excuse me Dad, I think something got in my eye. Write back soon. I love you and miss you, Rozina.

A PRAYER

Dear Allah, I believe in You and trust in You with all my heart. Please help me to stay firm on the right path even when all the kids around me are following the popular culture. Sometimes it seems as if they are having all the fun while I am bored and confined, but I know deep down in my heart that what I am doing is right. Please be with me when it seems as if I am alone. Please be my Friend when I have no other. I know You understand what I am going through. Please help me smile and hold my head up high when I am challenged. I trust you, my dear Allah, to protect me from everything that leads me away from You and to help me walk on the paths that lead me to You.

Ameen

Think a positive thought
Let the negatives float away
Dream of blue skies and a warm sun
And the clouds won't seem so grey
Put a smile on your face
Put your frowns and groans away
We make our own tunes
For this song called life
So hum along on a high note
Be a cheery melody today



When we believe in Allah
And ask Him for the best
He listens to us and grants our prayers
They make take a while
Or come wrapped in layers
But Allah listens to it all
We just have to wait,
Keep our minds focused on the bright
And things are sure to turn out right
Where there's a will there's a way
Think a positive thought today

Behold the power of positive thinking!

What is positive thinking anyway? It simply means consciously (on purpose) thinking of good things and hoping, praying and believing that they will happen. It also involves thinking well of other people and believing that they have good intentions.

Take this quiz to see how positive your thinking is

1. You wake up in the morning and realize you overslept and might be late for school. You immediately
 - a. Start thinking of how horrible this day will be, since you got a bad start by waking up late.
 - b. Run to ask your mother why she did not wake you up.
 - c. Decide to fake you are sick and stay home from school.
 - d. Grab your clothes and dash to the bathroom, thinking you can make it if you rush and just grab a granola bar for breakfast, glad that you packed your things the night before.



2. Just before lunch, your teacher informs you that the Principal wants to see you in her office. You
 - a. Ask her if she knows why the Principal called you, hoping it's just a routine message for your parents.
 - b. Close your eyes and pray that this turns out to be a nightmare.
 - c. Sink into gloom thinking of all the trouble you might be in.
 - d. Hardly eat anything at lunch with all the worry.
3. When you go into your room you notice that your beloved purple petunia plant is not on its spot in the windowsill. It's lying on the floor and the pot is cracked. You
 - a. grab your brother and wallop him because you feel sure he came in and meddled with it.

- b. calmly think of a logical explanation: the wind might have knocked it over since the window was open.
 - c. Decide to never get plants again.
 - d. Plan to sneak into your brother's room at night and paint his nails purple.
4. You get a C on a math test that you thought you knew well. You convince yourself that
 - a. You will always get poor grades in math.
 - b. Your only mistake was to forget your lucky socks.
 - c. It's because your mother made you eat oatmeal for breakfast.
 - d. Everyone gets bad grades once in a while and you will work harder next time and get a B or an A.
5. There is a new gym teacher in school and she has made you sit out of games twice for small mistakes. You think about it and decide that:
 - a. Gym will be torture from now on since the new teacher is out to get you.
 - b. You will be more careful and try to avoid things that annoy the teacher.
 - c. Your father should call the principal and complain about the teacher.
 - d. You should think up excuses to miss gym class from now on.
6. You have been praying for a week to be picked for the volleyball team, but you do not make it, so you think
 - a. You should just stay away from sports as you are no good.
 - b. Volleyball is boring anyway and only losers like it.
 - c. You just need some more practice. Prayers are a request to Allah, He always listens but sometimes we need to try harder, or the thing we ask for is simply not good for us in some way.
 - d. Allah did not make it happen, so what's the point of praying anyway.
7. You keep trying to focus when you start your salat but you still get distracted quickly. So you



- a. Remind yourself that it is the effort that counts and concentration takes a while to come. You just need to keep trying.
- b. Think you might skip salat till you are about 40 years old.
- c. Decide to go faster so it is over quickly.
- d. Just let your mind drift wherever it goes and stop trying to focus.

How did you do? The answers might seem quite obvious when we see them here with all the choices in front of us, but when something happens and we don't have a lot of time to react, often we automatically react out of habit. So a person used to thinking negatively, would probably expect the bad to get worse and give up trying. A person who knows that positive thinking is powerful will most likely guide their minds towards a better, sunnier outlook and feel better about things, no matter what happens.

It would be fun to have your parents or friends take this quiz.

Sometimes we are not aware of our thinking patterns till we evaluate them.

Do you know someone who is usually positive? Do you like them or not? Do you think they are happy? How do you feel when you are with them?

Do you know someone who usually points out the negative parts of everything?



**Do you think they have fun doing that?
How do you feel when you are with
them?**

**What kind of person would you like to spend more time
with?**

What kind of person would you like to become?

**Ask Ayesha and she will answer you weird, wise and
wacky questions**

Dear Ayesha, other than the Quran and Hadith, how do we know about the history of Islam?

That's a very interesting question! I hadn't really thought of it much before you sent me the question, but I have been in a situation where the answer matters.



Back in sixth grade, my class learned about Islamic History in our Social Studies class. A prominent theme in that lesson was that the Prophet Muhammad raided and stole from Meccan caravans (groups of merchants carrying their goods to trade and sell). Of course, right away I knew that couldn't be true! Not only had I never heard of the Holy Prophet doing such a thing, it didn't seem that our truthful, honest Prophet whose enemies even trusted him to keep their valuables for them would ever do anything like stealing! I raised my hand and told the class that wasn't true. Then I went home and asked my parents and they verified that the Prophet would never do such a thing. So I wrote a letter to the publishers of the Social Studies textbook and told them they had their facts wrong. Their reply was that some professor in Egypt had verified the chapter. Now what? As far as I was concerned, it was my parent's word against this professor's. Neither I, nor the publishers had very reliable sources! So how indeed do we know about the history of Islam other than the Quran and Hadith?

Well, first of all, the *Hadith* are very reliable historical resources about the Prophet's life. The ones that are related as being "*Sahih*" or "Sound *Hadith*" require that the person who reported them be known to be reliable and truthful; that he/she have firsthand knowledge of the incident; and that it be free of any irregularities. So truthfully, the *Hadith* are the best historical source for the Prophet's life and that of his companions. However, Islamic history after the Prophet's life may be a more tricky matter. You see, we live in a world where most history and history books are passed down from European sources. Since much of Islamic history as told by the Europeans several centuries ago was meant to vilify Muslims (mostly for political reasons), the history that is related is skewed to represent Muslims in a negative light. Of course not all negative stories are untrue and not all positive stories are true. So how can we tell the difference?



Well, I think the best thing to do is what was done for *Hadith* and what is done at any respectable academic institution: verify your sources! Make sure the narrator is reliable and unbiased. Make sure the narrator knows what is being related as first hand as possible. Make sure the story is not inconsistent with what you do know to be true. The first and second things are difficult for us to do all the time. But the last is easy. You know about the Prophet, and you know Islamic ideals. It should be easy to know if what you read or hear does not make sense for the kind of people you know the Prophet and his companions to be. From there, you can always look up sources in more detail or ask your parents for help!



If you want some interesting movies you can watch that do a pretty good job of going through the history of The Prophet's life, the animated movie, "Muhammad, the last Prophet" and the movie, "The Message" are worth watching.

Dear Ayesha, do you think Eid could become a national holiday in the U.S. in the future?

That's an interesting question and of course, everything I say is really just a guess. But this question did get me thinking about our society and what makes a society in general. We were just talking about the history of Islam in the question above; and it just so happens we recently started a new year on the Islamic calendar.

Do you know what special event in Islamic history marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar? It is the *Hijrah*, or the migration of the Prophet and his close Muslim followers to Medina. The Prophet and his followers had to escape to Medina because the Meccans were getting out of control in their cruelty toward them. They left everything they had and started to build a



new life for themselves in Medina. With the help of the *Ansar*, or the native Medina people who took the Meccan Muslims into their homes, these early Muslims constructed a new society: the first Islamic society. What was cool about this society is that even though the majority of people in it were Muslim, there were also Jews and Christians and people of other religions that lived in the community. All

these different groups of people were allowed to have equal rights under the Prophet's rule and were even allowed to choose if they wanted to be judged under Muslim law or the law of their own religion if ever there was a dispute. In other words, this first Islamic society was a pluralistic society (different colors, kinds, and religions of people). It was a lot like our society in the US currently in terms of composition!

Also, in both of these societies, people were escaping from religious intolerance and cruelty. They were building a new society where they would be free from that. So they had to sit down and think of what values they wanted their society to have. However, the difference is, the Medina society was built on religious freedom based on that being an Islamic principle, whereas, the US is built on a separation of religion from government as a way to ensure religious freedom. Even Christmas as a holiday is given the term "winter holiday" and is not really a religious holiday. There are no federal holidays that are religious. So I do not think Eid will ever be a federal holiday. However, I think if there are a majority of Muslims anywhere, within a school or business, maybe Eid will be a day off. The important thing is, we live in a society that allows for that kind of religious flexibility!



Dear Ayesha, I can't think of any good New Year's Resolutions to make. All my friends have made resolutions but I am stuck. Can you help me think of something really good?

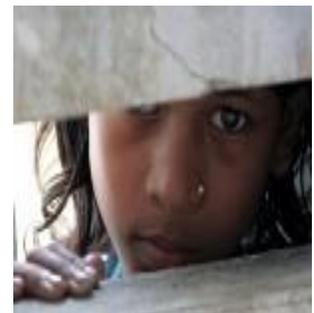
Dear Rusty about Resolutions, New Year is a great time to think about our values. Each person's values combine to make up our world. Our society is a reflection of the thoughts and beliefs of the people who compose it. The values of the people in a society shape their interactions and environment. If there are certain values that are more prominent in a country, it is perhaps because people exert greater effort and put greater resources toward them because in their mind, those certain values are important. If ambition, self-interest, lack of tolerance, and fear of other people are the thoughts that are in the minds of people—those are the qualities that will shape the society. Things like religious freedom will



disappear. However, if a person is full of compassion, concern, intelligence, wisdom, equity, justice, thoughtfulness, and inclusiveness, these values will shape the society. Since even the laws of a country are subject to change at the will of the people, the internal characteristics a person has become very, very important. Also, while laws can prevent horrible things like killing or stealing, if laws are the only thing stopping a person from doing these things, he or she will always try to push the limits of the law or be sneaky and get around it. Only the internal character of a person and the person's own desire to understand the importance of goodness will bring about a lasting change in society. Basically, who you are as a person, shapes the world around you, and so it is important to be a good and moral person—not because someone tells you to, but because you want to be one yourself.

Now is a great time to make some resolutions. Since it is also a New Year on the Islamic calendar and that was the beginning of a new society, this year, let's think of how we can change ourselves and how we can put goodness out into the world to influence our society. Think of a value you wished everybody had. Spend some time thinking how you can make that value stronger in yourself and influence your world through it. My value for this year is patience. I am going to try to be more patient in my own life. I think I can influence my little world by spending more time with each individual patient I see and encouraging them to slow down in their own life and take time to relax with family, or go on a walk, or do other healthy activities.

If your value is forgiveness, you can build it in yourself by not fighting with your brother or sister the next time they bother you. I bet if they see you are willing to forgive them, they will forgive you too the next time you make a mistake. Maybe somebody at school will see you letting something go even if it wasn't totally fair and decide that is the cool way to be! Soon everybody will be more willing to let things go and the whole school will be more relaxed and friendly!



One last thing, there is another society right now that has to be built, or re-built. I am sure you all know of the horrible earthquake in Haiti. Sadly, it hit in their capital city so they don't have all the things that usually make a

society function. No laws, no water supply, no electricity, no food. Maybe you can exercise your new resolutions by helping these people out. If your value is being charitable, see if you can start a fundraiser for them. If your value is compassion, do some volunteer work helping the organizations that are going to Haiti. If your value is mercy, see if you can provide a refugee family with some clothes or food. Remember the best resolutions are when you try to do something to make the world a better world. Even if you help one person, that makes a big difference.

Be creative, and do what you can!



We look forward to hearing from you at Lighthouse Magazine. Please send us your contributions each month at zamustang@msn.com.

We wish all our readers
a blessed New Year
filled with health, faith
and happiness.