

IKR 2016 CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1

Dina strives to be a practicing Muslim. She surrounds herself with like-minded friends, she prays on time, fasts in Ramadan and reads Qur'an a few times a week. Dina listens to Qur'an more than she does music and maintains healthy family relationships, especially with her parents. Lately, Dina has been struggling with a series of perceived setbacks. A suitor that she has been communicating with, abruptly sought to end their relationship. Dina also got into a car accident, and now has to wait a week while her car gets repaired. In addition, Dina just found out her mother has a condition that needs extra medical attention including frequent assisted trips to the doctor's office, which will become her responsibility. And finally, Dina got passed over for a "high-profile" project at her marketing firm, although she is one of the most qualified. Rumor has it that Dina did not get chosen since she wears hijab. This "last straw" is making Dina reconsider wearing hijab, especially in the "New Trump Era." Dina is feeling overwhelmed and depressed. She doesn't understand why all of this is happening to her, especially while she is trying so hard to please Allah. Dina is starting to feel bitter, especially as she sees her other friends, who are either non-Muslim or seem to be less practicing than she is, in a much happier state.

- A. What are some of the ten characteristics Dina lacks in her relationship towards Allah despite her good actions?
- B. What are some good outcomes that could come out of each of Dina's four calamities?
- C. What is the faulty logic Dina displays in her understanding of success?
- D. What are some steps Dina could take to overcome these negative feelings?

ANSWERS to IKR CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1: Answer

A. *What are some of the characteristics Dina lacks in her relationship towards Allah despite her good actions?* Although Dina strives to fulfill Allah's commandments, she needs to strengthen a few key characteristics:

1. Gratitude/ الشكر

The more Dina can focus on the blessings in her life, the more grateful she will be. Although she is overwhelmed with a lot of difficulty, Dina should reflect on all of the positives: the fact that both of her parents are alive and living with her, she has a job, a car, she is healthy, and has her faith. When we are more grateful to Allah swt, we can experience contentment, or *ridaa*. Prophet Muhammad, pbuh, reminds us in a hadith: "Whoever wakes up safely in his home and is healthy in his body and has provisions for his day, he would have acquired all the worldly possessions he is in need of." (Tirmidhi)

2. Patience/الصبر

Only Allah knows the future, so we need to be patient in waiting for what we want. For example, in the case of waiting for the right spouse, only Allah knows when and if it will come. Becoming anxious or upset when setbacks occur will only frustrate Dina and may cause her to pull away from Allah swt. Remember that even the great Prophets before us suffered calamities, yet they remained patient. When Prophet Yacub learned that his beloved son, Yusuf, was plotted against by his elder sons he said, "...patience is best."

Surah Yusuf, 12:18

فَصَبِّرْ جَمِيلًا

3. Reliance on Allah (swt)/ التوكل

When Dina begins to feel frustrated and depressed, she is forgetting that all she can do is perform her obligations and do what she can to contribute to her success, and then leave the rest up to Allah. In the case of not being chosen for the high-profile project at work, Dina has to remember, it doesn't matter if it had anything to do with her hijab. Dina's responsibility is to worship Allah as he commanded, and fulfill her daily duties with utmost

excellence. All she can *and should do* after that, is rely on Allah. Allah swt reminds us of how the God-Conscious are rewarded:

Whoever fears Allah (is God-Conscious), He brings forth a way out for him, (2) And provides him (with what he needs) from where he does not even imagine. And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him.

Surah Al-Talaq, 65: 2-3

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا (٢) وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ٥

- B. What are some good outcomes that could come out of each of Dina's four calamities?
1. Dina doesn't know that her suitor was best for her. Allah swt in His infinite Wisdom, may very well have protected her from a situation that would have negatively impacted her life, her faith or her next life.
 2. By Dina getting into an accident, she cannot use her car for a week. Did she reflect on how blessed she was to be safe and unharmed? Many people are scarred physically and/or mentally for the rest of their lives by car accidents. Secondly, not having a car allows Dina to appreciate how others live: taking public transportation, riding their bicycles, or walking. She may notice parts of the city she would have never noticed had she not broken out of her driving routine. Finally, Dina will be more appreciative of her car, and perhaps the other blessings in her life, since she had the opportunity to taste life outside of her regular routine.
 3. By Dina's mother getting sick, Dina now has the special opportunity to gain great reward for helping her mother. Allah has given Dina the chance to experience true patience, humility, and compassion in dealing with her mother. Perhaps their relationship will grow even stronger if Dina takes advantage of the blessed opportunities Allah has created. Dina has the ability to appreciate her mother even more as she cares for her, hopefully taking into account that all of her help will never equal what Dina's mother has done for her.

Abdullah Ibn 'Umar saw a Yemeni man performing Tawaf (circumambulating the Ka'bah in Mecca) while carrying his mother on his back. This man said to Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, "I am like a tame camel for her! I have carried her more than

she carried me. Do you think I have paid her back, oh Ibn 'Umar?" Abdullah Ibn 'Umar replied, "No, not even one contraction!!" (Source: Al-Adab al-Mufrad Bukhari, 1/62)

4. When Dina was not selected for the high-profile position at work, she should think about what Allah may have protected her from by being involved. Again, only Allah knows the future, and we often delve ourselves into the murky depths of the "what if's?" The rumor that she was not chosen due to her hijab should not affect her resolve as to why she wears it, for it is only for the sake of Allah swt.

C. What is the faulty logic Dina displays in her understanding of success?

Dina equates worldly success with the ultimate success. Allah has explained ultimate success for us:

"Success is really attained by the believers."

Surah Al-Mu'minoon, 23:1

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"...and repent to Allah O believers, all of you, so that you may achieve success."

Surah Al-Nur, 24:31

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Dina should also remember the hadith of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him said: "Look at those below you (less fortunate than you), and don't look at those above you, for this is better." [Muslim]

D. What are some steps Dina could take to overcome these negative feelings?

To be sad, depressed (clinical mental illness should be addressed with a health professional in addition to purifying the soul), and/or frustrated are normal human emotions. How we deal with these emotions, however, can either lead to spiritual health or to a negative downward spiral. Dina should increase her remembrance of Allah swt by routinely engaging in dhikr, especially in the morning and in the evenings. As mentioned earlier in Answer A, Dina should increase her gratitude, patience and reliance on Allah swt. To do all of these things require taking time out of the day to reflect and connect with Allah swt. This is the type of spiritual self care that will fortify Dina's spirit and allow her to get back on track. Surrounding herself with solid friends and family who will remind her of Allah and support her will also help Dina successfully deal with her negative feelings.