Shaykh Ahmad Tijani: Comprehensive Advice

A letter Shaykh Tijani wrote to counsel all his students and muqaddams on how to behave throughout life

In the name of Allah, the Most Widely and Most Deeply Merciful. May Allah send salah and salam upon Sayyiduna Muhammad, his family, and his companions, after the praise of Allah, Whose praise is mighty and Whose attributes and names are free from defect.

This letter is from Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Tijani, to all of our beloved brothers and sisters, destitute before Allah, in Fez and its environs. May Allah preserve you all from every trial, misfortune, and test, Amin! Salam, Allah’s mercy, and His blessings be upon you, in a way that envelops you and all of your states.

I advise myself and all of you with the advice that Allah has given you and the orders He has commanded you to do. Guard His limits and observe the divine command as much as you are able and can exert yourselves, for this is a time in which the foundations of divine ordinance have been utterly destroyed and people have plunged headlong into what harms them in this life and the next. In this dire time, there is no way to completely return to or be conscious of what brings the hearts back to Allah and allows people to observe His limits—whether in His commands or His prohibitions—and no one has the ability to fulfill Allah’s commands in every respect, except those clothed with the sweetness of ma’rifah of Allah, or near to it.

But given that this is how things are, and the slave finds no refuge from what Allah has placed him in, the spotted color is better than the completely black. So as much as you are able, stop going against the order of Allah, take up His commands as much as your energy allows you to, and set for yourselves a daily practice of doing things that wipe away sins. There are many different practices of expiation you can do, some of which we addressed adequately in our first counsel to you. They also include:
• al-Hizb al-Sayfi every morning and evening, at least once, up to as many times as you wish
• al-Musabba’at al-’Ashr every morning and evening
• at least 100 Salatul-Fatihi morning and evening—no other action matches this, and nothing is more effective in helping one achieve one’s goals

Be consistent in praying the fard salah in congregation. Guard this practice, for it is guaranteed to keep you safe from everything that can destroy you, except for a short list of items that require specific penalties. Allah (s.w.t.) has special treatment for the ones who stick to this: so many breaks will He mend for them, so much nakedness will He clothe for them, so many slips will He overlook, and so many times will He take them by the hand when they slip and fall! Also, you must guard your dhikr of Allah and salah of the Tariqa h, you should intend thereby to glorify and magnify Allah (s.w.t.) and His Messenger (s.a.w.s.) day and night, as much as you are able and as much as your time and energy allow. Neither go to excess nor fall short in this, and intend thereby to glorify and magnify Allah (s.w.t.) and His Messenger (s.a.w.s.), and to stand at the door of Allah, seeking His pleasure and nothing else. Allah (s.w.t.) also has special treatment for those who persist in this—they will find its blessing in the short and long term and taste the sweet pleasure of it, reaching whatever they hope for. This practice, in terms of its peculiar qualities and its secrets, is like salah in congregation—the two are the same.

You must give charity every night and day if you can, even if just a copper penny or a single morsel of food, after fulfilling the financial obligations Allah has set upon you. For Allah’s (s.w.t.) special treatment for those who do so is similar to His special treatment for those who persist in praying the fard salah in congregation.

From all of the litanies that you maintain, after the required wudu of the Tariqa, you should perform al-Hizb al-Sayfi and Salatul-Fatihi, for these two will suffice you from having to do any other litany and allow you to reach your goals, through the grace of Allah. No other action matches these two.
You must keep family ties in every way that brings good feeling to the heart and engenders love, even if it means just seeing how people are doing and greeting them. Avoid enmity towards family members, flagrant disrespect to your parents, and anything that engenders hatred in the hearts of siblings. Avoid looking into other Muslims’ private affairs, for whoever does so, Allah will expose their private affairs and the private affairs of their children after them. Constantly overlook others’ faults, and forgive the defects of every believer, most importantly those of your brothers and sisters in the Tariqah. For Allah will overlook many faults of the one who over looks another’s fault. If someone amongst you slips up, then comes to apologize, accept their apology and forgive them, so that Allah will accept your apologies and forgive your shortcomings. The most evil of brothers in the presence of Allah is the one who neither accepts apologies nor dismisses slips. Reflect on Allah’s (s.w.t.) words, “And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden whose breadth is the heavens and the earth, prepared for all of their affairs come tumbling down. So only respond to evil by ignoring, forgiving, and overlooking it.

If you see that Allah has placed people in a situation that is indecent either by the standards of shari’ah or by common decency, you should not oppose them in it, for their affairs run according to divine will. Allah has them in His grasp and they have no way to avoid His ruling; all of their affairs are manifested by His decree and determination. Excepted from this is what reprimands you are obligated to give them under the shari’ah, on a few occasions when temporary disturbances arise in their lives and misfortune strikes, but not at all
times. Sit with the Prophet’s (s.a.w.s.) saying, “Enjoin good and forbid evil until you see avarice obeyed, whim followed, and everyone with an opinion infatuated with their own opinion—in that case, just look out for your own private affairs.” And sit with his (s.a.w.s.) saying, “One of the points of excellence of a person’s Islam is for them to leave that which does not concern them.”

You must give sincere advice to your brothers and sisters in the Tariqah gently and tactfully, without engendering rancor or enmity. And every one of you should take some time to make dhikr of Allah privately, at least the extent of the required Wird of the Tariqah. Anyone who does so will find its blessing in all of their actions and aspirations. You must obey the muqaddam in whatever good he orders you to do, bad he forbids you from, or effort he makes to improve relations between you.

You must be consistent with the Wadhifah, performing it in the morning and evening if you are able; if not, then once a day is enough. If doing Istighfar, Salatul-Fatihi, and Tah lil 100 times each for the Wadhifa is too burdensome for you, then you may lighten the Salatul-Fatihi to 50 and the Istighfar to 30 times, with the formula “أستغفر ﷲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤﻲ ﺎﻟﺤиться برفع ولاين وسياسة من غير ضغينة ولا حدق. وليجعل كل واحد منكم وقتا يذكر الله فيه في خولة. أقل ذلك عدد الورد الذي هو لازم الطريقة. فإن العمل بذلك يجد بركته في جميع مآتريه وتصرفاته. وعليكم ببطاعة المقدم بإعطاء الورد مهما أمرك بهمك أو نهاكم عن منكر، أو سعي في إصلاح بينكم.

وعليكم بmalazima الوظيفة المعلومة لمن استطاع صباحا ومساء، وإلا فرد وحدة في الصباح أو المساء فإنها تكفي. وخفقنا من وردا إن تقل عليكم واجبها خمسين من صناعة الفاتح لما أغلق الخ والاستغفار. إن شئتم، اذكروا استغفر الله العظيم الذي لا إله إلا هو الحي القيوم، ثلاثين مرة يكفي عن الاستغفار مائة مرة في الوظيفة.

وصاية من كان مقدما على إعطاء الورد أن يعفو للإخوان عن الزلل، وبسط رداء عفوه على كل خلل. وأن يبتدي ما يوجب في قلوبهم ضغينة أو شينا أو حسدا، وأن يسعى في إصلاح ذات بينهم وفي كل ما يوجب في قلوبهم بغضهم على بعض. وإن اشتعلت نار بينهم سارع في إطفائها، وأن ينهي من راه يسعى في النبية بينهم وأن يزجر برفق ولين.

وعليه أن يعمله بالرفق والتيسير والبعد عن التنفير والتعسير في كل ما يأمرهم به وينهاهم عنه من حقوق الله وحقوق الأخوان، ويراعي في ذلك قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "يبرعوا ولا تتعاروا وعندكم ولا تتغروا. " وعلى أن يتباعد عن تغيزم دنياهم، وأن لا يلفت لما في أديهم معتقدان أن تعالى هو المعطي والمائع والخافض والرافق. وليجعل همه في تحرير دنياهم وعليكم بمناصحة إخوانكم في الطريقة برفع ولاين وسياسة من غير ضغينة ولا حدق. وليجعل كل واحد منكم وقتا يذكر الله فيه في خولة. أقل ذلك عدد الورد الذي هو لازم الطريقة. فإن العمل بذلك يجد بركته في جميع مآتريه وتصرفاته. وعليكم ببطاعة المقدم بإعطاء الورد مهما أمرك بهمك أو نهاكم عن منكر، أو سعي في إصلاح بينكم.

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gaze to seek what they possess, always believing that Allah (s.w.t.) is the Giver, the Withholder, the Abaser, and the Raiser. He should aspire to liberate the material gains they have earned from dissipation and waste, and not ask them to give him anything—small or large—except what their nafs permit them to offer, without being asked for it, for indeed this is how people's minds work, and where all of their affairs take them.

Show deference to the general public and those whom Allah has placed in authority, without letting yourselves avoid them, spread hate of them, or dispute with them. Allah is the one who places His servants where He wants them, and no one can remove them from where He has placed them.

Shun leadership and its causes, for this is a Kabah around which all evils circumambulate, and it is the resting place of destruction in this life and the next. Whoever amongst you is tried by affliction or evil, they should persevere and await relief from Allah. For every difficulty has a limit, and every disaster has relief. If their affairs start feeling constricted, then they must turn to Allah in fervent supplication and need until Allah brings relief and fulfills all hopes. Do not be impatient with afflicted with the divine decree, and completely grateful to Allah, for every difficulty has a limit, and every disaster has relief. If their affairs start feeling constricted, then they must turn to Allah in fervent supplication and need until Allah brings relief and fulfills all hopes. Do not be impatient with afflicted individuals.

Peace, Allah’s mercy, and His blessings be upon you all.