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FOUNDATIONS OF TAWHID · ARTICLE 04

Tawhid First

The Foundation of Knowledge, Worship, Da'wah, and Reform

Tawhid is the beginning, governing foundation, and end of the Muslim's path. It directs knowledge, Qur'an recitation, worship, purification, da'wah, family life, and reform.

Prepared by

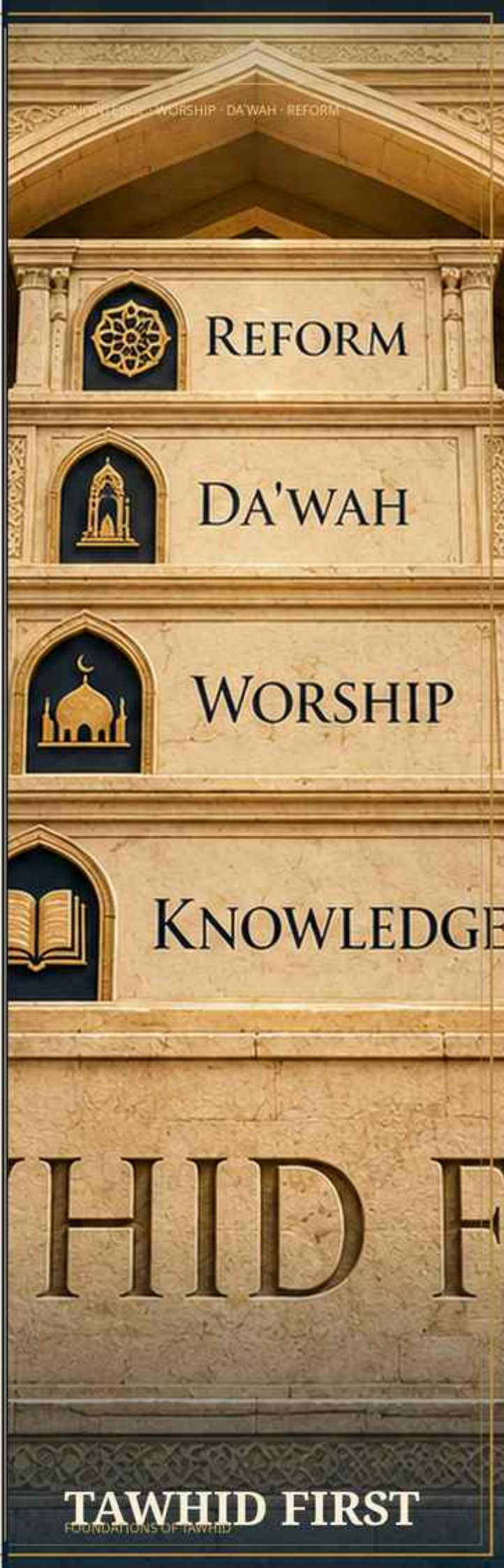
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Tawhid is the beginning, governing foundation, and end of the Muslim's path. It directs knowledge, Qur'an recitation, worship, purification, da‘wah, family life, and reform. The stronger its realization becomes - in knowledge, faith, certainty, sincerity, and following - the stronger the worship and reform built upon it become, by Allah's permission.

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Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.

Every sound structure requires a sound foundation. If the foundation is weakened, decorating the exterior cannot preserve the structure for long. The same is true of the religion of the individual Muslim, the education of a family, the programme of a masjid, the da'wah of a caller, and every effort to reform a community.

The foundation is Tawhid: singling Allah out in His Lordship, singling Him out in every act of worship, affirming His Names and Attributes as revealed, and directing the religion sincerely to Him alone.

Yet Tawhid is more than a foundation laid once and then left behind. It is the beginning of the servant's path, the governing reality throughout the path, and the end upon which he hopes to meet Allah. The Muslim enters Islam through the testimony of Tawhid. He renews its meanings in every prayer. He reads a Qur'an whose message continually returns him to Allah, His right, His command, His promise, and His warning. He purifies his heart from what contradicts or weakens servitude to Allah. He follows the Messenger of Allah ﷺ so that his worship of Allah is correct. He calls to Allah rather than to himself. He reforms his family and community by building worship, knowledge, character, and conduct upon the right of Allah.

For this reason, **“Tawhid first” does not merely identify the first lesson in a sequence. It identifies the governing foundation of the whole religion.** Knowledge clarifies Tawhid and the command of Allah. Worship realizes it. Following the Messenger ﷺ gives that worship its revealed form. Purification removes what corrupts it. Da'wah begins from it. Reform grows from it.

The stronger the servant's realization of Tawhid becomes—in knowledge, faith, certainty, sincerity, love, fear, hope, reliance, submission, and following—the stronger his worship and the sounder its fruits become, by Allah's permission. This is not the increase of a slogan or of terminology alone. It is the increase of living faith and servitude to Allah.

1. Tawhid Is the Purpose of Creation and Allah's Greatest Right

Allah said:

وما خلقت الجن والإنس إلا ليعبدون

“I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they worship Me.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Dhariyat 51:56.

This ayah establishes the great legislated purpose for which jinn and mankind were created. They were not created aimlessly. Work, family, provision, construction, study, and lawful enjoyment all have their places in worldly life, but none of them is the final purpose of existence. They are placed beneath the higher purpose of knowing Allah, worshipping Him, obeying Him, and preparing to meet Him.

The following ayat remove any thought that Allah benefits from the worship of His servants:

ما أريد منهم من رزق وما أريد أن يطعمون إن الله هو الرزاق ذو القوة
المتين

“I do not desire from them any provision, nor do I desire that they feed Me. Indeed, Allah is the Provider, the Possessor of firm strength.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Dhariyat 51:57–58.

Allah is completely free of need. The servants need Him. They need His guidance, mercy, forgiveness, provision, protection, and reward. Worship does not increase His dominion, and disobedience does not diminish it. Tawhid is therefore not a favour the servant gives to his Lord. It is the right of Allah and the greatest necessity of the servant.

Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

حق الله على العباد أن يعبدوه ولا يشركوا به شيئاً

“Allah’s right over the servants is that they worship Him and do not associate anything with Him.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2856; Sahih Muslim, no. 30. Agreed upon and authentic.

This hadith gathers the foundation in one statement: worship Allah and associate nothing with Him. Tawhid is not fulfilled by merely acknowledging that Allah exists or that He created the heavens and the earth. It requires that supplication, devotional reliance, sacrifice, vows, devotional fear, devotional hope, repentance, and every other act of devotion be directed to Allah alone.

The same right governs every stage of the Muslim's life. When he seeks knowledge, he seeks it to know and obey Allah. When he prays, he stands before Allah. When he gives charity, he seeks the Face of Allah. When he advises, he intends the pleasure of Allah and the guidance of His servants. When he cares for his family, works lawfully, fulfils a trust, or restrains himself from sin, he does so as a servant of Allah.

The first question governing his life is therefore not merely, "What do I want to accomplish?" It is:

Am I fulfilling the purpose for which Allah created me, and is what I am doing truly for Him?

2. Tawhid Was the Foundation of Every Messenger's Call

Allah said:

ولقد بعثنا في كل أمة رسولا أن اعبدوا الله واجتنبوا الطاغوت

"We certainly sent a Messenger to every nation, saying: Worship Allah and avoid taghut."

Source: Qur'an, al-Nahl 16:36.

Allah also said:

وما أرسلنا من قبلك من رسول إلا نوحي إليه أنه لا إله إلا أنا فاعبدون

"We did not send any Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: None has the right to be worshipped but Me, so worship Me."

Source: Qur'an, al-Anbiya' 21:25.

The Messengers differed in some subsidiary laws according to the wisdom of Allah, but their religion in its foundation was one. They called to knowing the true Lord, worshipping Him alone, rejecting every false object of worship, and obeying the Messenger sent by Him.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

أنا أولى الناس بعيسى ابن مريم في الدنيا والآخرة، والأنبياء إخوة لعلات،
أمهاتهم شتى، ودينهم واحد

“I am the closest of people to ‘Isa son of Maryam in this world and the Hereafter. The Prophets are paternal brothers: their mothers are different, but their religion is one.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3443; a corresponding authentic wording is in Sahih Muslim, no. 2365. Authentic.

Tawhid was therefore not one topic among unrelated topics in their mission. It was the foundation that gave every command its direction. Prayer was worship of Allah. Justice was obedience to Allah. Patience was for Allah. Repentance was to Allah. Lawful and unlawful conduct were received from Allah through His Messenger.

The Prophetic order appears with particular clarity in the instruction given to Mu‘adh رضي الله عنه when he was sent to Yemen:

إنك تقدم على قوم من أهل الكتاب، فليكن أول ما تدعوهم إلى أن
يوحدوا الله تعالى

“You are going to a people from the People of the Book, so let the first matter to which you call them be that they single out Allah, the Exalted, in Tawhid.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 7372. Authentic.

Another authentic wording states:

إِنَّكَ سَتَأْتِي قَوْمًا أَهْلَ كِتَابٍ، فَإِذَا جِئْتَهُمْ، فَادْعُهُمْ إِلَى أَنْ يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنْ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

“You will come to a people from the People of the Book. When you reach them, call them to testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1496. Authentic.

The narration then continues:

فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ، فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ، فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةً تَتَّخِذُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ فَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ

“If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah has obligated upon them five prayers in every day and night. If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah has obligated upon them charity, taken from their rich and returned to their poor.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1496; parallel authentic wording occurs in Sahih Muslim, no. 19. Authentic.

The order is clear: Tawhid and the two testimonies, then prayer, then zakah, and then the remaining religion. The foundation comes first, and the entire structure is built upon it. The hadith joins Tawhid to prayer and zakah in their proper order: the foundation first, followed by the obligations that manifest submission to Allah.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz رحمه الله explained:

فأول شيء يدعى إليه توحيد الله والإخلاص له والإيمان به ورسوله عليه الصلاة والسلام وبالإيمان بكل ما أخبر الله به ورسوله، فالتوحيد أول شيء ثم الدعوة إلى الصلاة والزكاة والصيام والحج وترك المعاصي وفعل كل ما أمر الله به وترك ما نهى الله عنه

“The first matter to which one calls is the Tawhid of Allah, sincerity to Him, faith in Him and His Messenger, and faith in everything Allah and His Messenger have informed us of. Tawhid is therefore first; then comes the call to prayer, zakah, fasting, Hajj, abandoning sins, carrying out everything Allah commanded, and leaving everything He prohibited.”

Source: Official website of Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, audio transcript, *Bab al-Du‘a’ ila Shahadati an la Ilaha illa Allah*.

This is the proper balance: Tawhid is genuinely first, while the whole religion is its necessary construction, realization, and fruit.

3. The Two Testimonies Form One Complete Foundation

The Prophet ﷺ said:

بني الإسلام على خمس: شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمدا رسول الله، وإقام الصلاة، وإيتاء الزكاة، والحج، وصوم رمضان

“Islam is built upon five: the testimony that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing prayer, giving zakah, pilgrimage, and fasting Ramadan.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 8; Sahih Muslim, no. 16. Agreed upon and authentic.

The two testimonies are inseparable.

The testimony that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah establishes whom the servant worships. It negates worship from every created being and affirms all worship for Allah alone.

The testimony that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah establishes how Allah is worshipped. It requires believing the Messenger ﷺ, obeying him, accepting what he authentically reported, avoiding what he prohibited, and worshipping Allah according to the guidance he conveyed.

Allah said:

من يطع الرسول فقد أطاع الله

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Nisa' 4:80.

Allah also said:

قل إن كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins.”

Source: Qur'an, Al 'Imran 3:31.

Following the Messenger ﷺ is therefore not separate from the worship of Allah. Allah commanded it, loves it, and made it the path by which His religion is known and practised. The more complete the servant's faith in the Messenger ﷺ, love for him, obedience to him, and adherence to his Sunnah become, the more correctly he can actualize the first testimony in practice. He learns from the Messenger what Allah loves, what He prohibits, how prayer is performed, how du'a is made, how the heart is purified, and how every act of worship is regulated.

Conversely, the more complete the servant's Tawhid becomes, the more sincerely he follows the Messenger ﷺ. He does not follow him as a cultural figure, tribal leader, or object of exaggerated devotion. He follows him as the servant and Messenger of Allah, because Allah sent him and commanded obedience to him.

Allah joined both foundations in one ayah:

فمن كان يرجو لقاء ربه فليعمل عملا صالحا ولا يشرك بعبادة ربه أحدا

“Whoever hopes to meet his Lord must perform righteous action and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:110.

The deed must be righteous according to revelation, and the worship must be free of shirk. Sincerity to Allah and conformity to the Messenger ﷺ are not competing concerns. Together they protect worship.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

من عمل عملا ليس عليه أمرنا فهو رد

“Whoever performs an action that is not in accordance with our matter will have it rejected.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 1718. Authentic.

Thus, the first testimony gives worship its exclusive object, and the second gives it its revealed way. The stronger both become in the servant's faith and practice, the more complete his Islam becomes.

4. The Qur'an Continually Returns the Servant to Tawhid

Tawhid is not confined to a few verses bearing an obvious doctrinal heading. The entire Qur'an teaches the servant who Allah is, what belongs to Him, how He is worshipped, what He commands, what He loves, what He prohibits, what He promises, and what He threatens.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said:

القرآن كله في التوحيد وحقوقه وجزائه، وفي شأن الشرك وأهله
وجزائهم

“The whole Qur’an concerns Tawhid, its rights and its recompense, and the affair of shirk, its people and their recompense.”

Source: Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na’budu wa-Iyyaka Nasta’in*, ed. Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, Beirut, second edition, 1393 AH/1973, vol. 3, pp. 449–450.

This meaning can be seen throughout revelation:

- Passages concerning Allah’s Names, Attributes, Lordship, knowledge, mercy, wisdom, power, and decree establish knowledge of the One worshipped.
- Commands and prohibitions establish the rights and requirements of Tawhid.
- Accounts of the Messengers show the call to Tawhid, the opposition of shirk, and the fruits of obedience and patience.
- Promises describe the reward of faith and righteous action.
- Warnings describe the end of shirk, disbelief, hypocrisy, and disobedience.
- The Hereafter establishes that the servant will return to Allah and be judged by Him alone.

Reciting the Qur’an is therefore a continual return to Tawhid. It is a renewal of knowledge of Allah, glorification of Him, fear of Him, hope in Him, love for Him, reliance upon Him, and submission to His command.

Allah said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَجَلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

“The believers are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, whose faith increases when His verses are recited to them, and who rely upon their Lord.”

Source: Qur’an, al-Anfal 8:2.

The ayah joins remembrance of Allah, increase of faith, recitation of revelation, and reliance upon Him. The Qur’an does not merely provide information. When received with faith, understanding, contemplation, and submission, it increases the servant in iman.

This is especially visible in Surat al-Fatihah, which the Muslim recites in every rak'ah. It begins with praise of Allah, His Lordship over all creation, His mercy, and His ownership of the Day of Judgment. It then gathers the whole path in one declaration:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Fatihah 1:5.

The first half is exclusive worship. The second directs the heart's ultimate reliance and worshipful seeking of aid to Allah alone. The servant then asks Allah for guidance to the straight path. Every prayer therefore renews knowledge, worship, dependence, and guidance.

The Muslim never finishes learning Tawhid because he never finishes learning the Qur'an. Every new understanding of Allah's Names and Attributes, every command he learns, every warning he heeds, and every promise in which he increases in certainty deepens his servitude.

5. Tawhid Gives Every Act of Worship Its Direction

Allah said:

قُلْ إِن صَلَاتِي وَنَسْكَي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, Lord of all creation. He has no partner. With this I have been commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.”

Source: Qur'an, al-An'am 6:162–163.

The ayah gathers the servant's prayer, sacrifice, life, and death beneath one direction: Allah alone. Tawhid does not sit beside worship as an unrelated subject. It tells worship **whom it is for, why it is performed, upon whom the heart relies, and whose command determines its form.**

The worship of the heart

The heart worships Allah through love, fear, hope, sincerity, reliance, repentance, humility, gratitude, and patience.

Allah said:

والذين آمنوا أشد حبا لله

“Those who believe are stronger in love for Allah.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:165.

Allah also said:

وعلى الله فتوكلوا إن كنتم مؤمنين

“Upon Allah place your reliance, if you are believers.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Ma'idah 5:23.

These are realities of Tawhid within the heart. The servant may use lawful means and seek ordinary help from created people within their ability, but the heart's ultimate dependence, devotional hope, devotional fear, and reliance belong to Allah.

Knowledge of Allah's Names and Attributes strengthens these acts. Knowing that Allah is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing strengthens watchfulness. Knowing that He is the Most Merciful strengthens hope. Knowing that He is severe in punishment strengthens fear. Knowing that He is the Provider strengthens reliance. Knowing that He is the Most High and the Magnificent strengthens glorification and humility.

Allah said:

ولله الأسماء الحسنى فادعوه بها

“To Allah belong the most beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them.”

Source: Qur'an, al-A'raf 7:180.

The worship of the tongue

The tongue realizes Tawhid through the testimony of faith, recitation of the Qur'an, remembrance, glorification, praise, supplication, seeking forgiveness, truthful speech, teaching, and sincere counsel.

A person may say true words while seeking reputation, victory for himself, or the praise of people. Tawhid corrects the direction of the tongue by correcting the intention behind it.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

“Actions are only by intentions, and each person will have only what he intended.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1; Sahih Muslim, no. 1907. Agreed upon and authentic.

The Prophet ﷺ also said:

الدين النصيحة قلنا لمن قال لله ولكتابه ولرسوله ولأئمة المسلمين وعامتهم

“Religion is sincere counsel. We said: To whom? He said: To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and their common people.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 55. Authentic.

Sincere counsel to the Muslims is therefore an act of religion. It is given seeking Allah's pleasure, in loyalty to His Book and the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ, while genuinely wanting good for the one addressed. When the Muslim calls, he calls to Allah rather than to his own personality, faction, status, or audience.

Allah said:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي

“Say: This is my way. I call to Allah upon clear insight—I and those who follow me.”

Source: Qur'an, Yusuf 12:108.

The worship of the limbs

The limbs realize Tawhid through prayer, fasting, zakah, Hajj, service to parents, fulfilment of trusts, lawful work, justice, modesty, restraint from sin, and every bodily act of obedience.

Prayer is among the greatest daily manifestations. The servant begins by declaring Allah greater than everything else. He stands before Him, recites His words, bows in glorification, prostrates in humility, invokes Him, and ends with testimony and peace. Each correctly performed prayer renews the practical meaning of Tawhid.

Fasting trains the servant to leave what is normally lawful because Allah commanded him. Charity purifies wealth when it is given seeking Allah's reward. Family rights become worship when they are fulfilled in obedience to Allah. Lawful work becomes rewardable when its means are lawful, its intention is sound, and the servant uses it to fulfil what Allah has required.

The stronger Tawhid becomes in the heart, the less these actions are performed mechanically or for people. They become acts of servitude, gratitude, obedience, and love.

6. Tawhid Purifies and Reforms the Soul

Allah said:

قد أفلح من زكاها وقد خاب من دساها

“Successful indeed is the one who purifies the soul, and failed indeed is the one who corrupts it.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Shams 91:9–10.

Purification of the soul is not detached self-improvement. Its highest foundation is to purify worship for Allah, cleanse the heart from shirk and ostentation, and bring the soul into submission to revelation.

Shaykh Ibn Baz رحمه الله explained:

تحقيق التوحيد: تخليصه وتنقيته وتصفيته من شوائب الشرك والبدع والمعاصي؛ لأن الشرك إن كان أكبر ينافي التوحيد بالكلية، وإن كان أصغر ينافي كماله الواجب؛ ولأن البدع تقدح في التوحيد؛ ولأن المعاصي تنقص ثواب أهل التوحيد

“Realizing Tawhid means purifying, cleansing, and refining it from the impurities of shirk, innovations, and sins. Major shirk contradicts Tawhid entirely; minor shirk contradicts its obligatory perfection; innovations damage Tawhid; and sins diminish the reward of the people of Tawhid.”

Source: Official website of Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz, explanation of the chapter *Whoever Realizes Tawhid Will Enter Paradise without Reckoning*.

This explanation shows that Tawhid is not an empty claim or a set of terms memorized without effect. Its realization requires continual correction.

The servant examines:

- whether his worship is directed to Allah alone;
- whether he seeks the praise of people;
- whether his heart relies excessively upon created means;
- whether love of status, wealth, or recognition competes with obedience;
- whether fear of people causes him to abandon truth;
- whether self-admiration corrupts his deeds;
- whether innovation has entered his worship;
- whether sins have weakened his heart and reduced the fruits of faith.

These matters do not all carry the same ruling. Major shirk destroys the foundation. Minor shirk contradicts obligatory perfection. Innovations and sins affect worship and its reward according to their nature. The point is that the servant’s work upon Tawhid continues through knowledge, repentance, purification, and obedience.

Ibn Abi al-‘Izz رحمه الله said:

لا حياة للقلوب ولا نعيم ولا طمأنينة إلا بأن تعرف ربها ومعبودها
وفاطرها

“There is no true life, delight, or tranquility for the hearts except through knowing their Lord, the One they worship, and their Originator.”

Source: Ibn Abi al-‘Izz al-Hanafi, *Sharh al-‘Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, first edition, 1418 AH, p. 6.

The heart is reformed by knowing Allah and living the implications of that knowledge. It learns to love Allah above all else, fear Him, hope in Him, rely upon Him, repent to Him, and submit to Him. This is why stronger Tawhid produces stronger inner worship.

The same process increases iman and certainty. Faith is not a static possession that never changes. It increases through revelation, obedience, remembrance, and contemplation, and it is weakened by ignorance, heedlessness, and sin. The servant therefore returns repeatedly to the Qur’an, prayer, du’a, knowledge, and repentance, not because the foundation has changed, but because his realization of it must deepen.

7. The Stronger the Realization of Tawhid, the Stronger the Whole Religion Becomes

Allah said:

ألم تر كيف ضرب الله مثلا كلمة طيبة كشجرة طيبة أصلها ثابت وفرعها
في السماء تؤتي أكلها كل حين بإذن ربها

“Have you not seen how Allah presents the example of a good word: like a good tree whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches reach into the sky, producing its fruit at all times by the permission of its Lord?”

Source: Qur’an, Ibrahim 14:24–25.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa’di رحمه الله explained the “good word” in this ayah as:

وهي شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله

“It is the testimony that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah.”

Source: ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Nasir al-Sa’di, *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, tafsir of Surat Ibrahim 14:24.

The image of the firmly rooted tree therefore provides a direct and fitting explanation of the religion’s structure. The root must be fixed. From the root grow branches, and from the branches come fruit.

Tawhid is the governing root. Knowledge, prayer, Qur’an, remembrance, following the Sunnah, obedience, character, family responsibility, da’wah, patience, and reform are among the branches and fruits nourished by it.

This is the precise sense in which **the stronger the servant’s realization of Tawhid becomes, the stronger everything built upon it becomes.**

- Stronger knowledge of Allah increases glorification, love, fear, hope, and reliance.
- Stronger sincerity protects worship from ostentation and the desire for praise.
- Stronger certainty produces steadier patience and less dependence upon the changing approval of people.
- Stronger following of the Messenger ﷺ makes worship more correct and protects it from innovation.
- Stronger repentance cleanses the heart after deficiency and returns the servant to obedience.
- Stronger awareness of meeting Allah improves conduct, trusts, family rights, and justice.

The strength intended is not the accumulation of terminology by itself. It is the strength of realized Tawhid: knowledge joined to faith, sincerity, submission, and action.

Allah said:

الذين آمنوا ولم يلبسوا إيمانهم بظلم أولئك لهم الأمن وهم مهتدون

“Those who believe and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing—for them is security, and they are guided.”

Source: Qur'an, al-An'am 6:82.

When this ayah became difficult for the Companions, the Prophet ﷺ explained that the wrongdoing intended here was shirk.

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 3360; Sahih Muslim, no. 124. Authentic.

The more completely faith is protected from shirk, the more complete the servant's share of security and guidance becomes. The same general principle appears throughout worship: purity of foundation strengthens the soundness of what grows from it.

A branch cannot replace the root, but a living root is not barren. Sound Tawhid should appear in prayer, sincerity, truthfulness, humility, reliance, repentance, obedience, and good conduct. When these fruits are weak, the Muslim does not abandon the foundation; he returns to it more deeply, learns it more correctly, and acts upon it more fully.

8. Tawhid Governs Knowledge, Da'wah, Family Life, and Reform

Knowledge

Allah said:

فاعلم أنه لا إله إلا الله واستغفر لذنبك

“Know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and seek forgiveness for your sin.”

Source: Qur'an, Muhammad 47:19.

Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله placed this verse beneath the chapter heading:

باب العلم قبل القول والعمل

“Chapter: Knowledge before speech and action.”

Source and attribution: Sahih al-Bukhari, *Kitab al-Ilm*, chapter heading. This is al-Bukhari's juristic heading and inference, not a Prophetic hadith.

Knowledge begins with knowing Allah, His right, His Messenger, and His religion by evidence. It then extends into every science needed to obey Him correctly.

Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah رحمه الله said:

أفضل العلم العلم بالله والعلم بأمر الله، فإذا كان العبد عالماً بالله وعالماً
بأمر الله فقد بلغ

“The best knowledge is knowledge of Allah and knowledge of Allah’s command. When the servant knows Allah and knows Allah’s command, he has attained the intended rank.”

Source: Abu Nu‘aym al-Isbahani, *Hilyat al-Awliya’ wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya’*, vol. 7, p. 281.

The servant needs both: knowledge of the One worshipped and knowledge of how He commanded worship to be performed. Tafsir explains the revelation of Allah. Hadith preserves the guidance of the Messenger ﷺ. Fiqh explains practical rulings. Arabic serves understanding of the texts. The sciences retain their distinct subjects, but their governing purpose is one: to know, worship, and obey Allah upon guidance.

Da‘wah

The caller calls to Allah upon insight. Tawhid corrects both his message and his intention. He is not trying to gather people around himself, defend his ego, or win disputes for reputation. He wants Allah to be worshipped and the Messenger ﷺ to be followed.

The instruction to Mu‘adh shows that da‘wah begins from the foundation and proceeds into the complete religion. It also shows that the caller knows the condition of those addressed. The truth does not change, but wise teaching connects the fixed foundation to the real needs of the listener.

The home and the masjid

Allah said:

يا أيها الذين آمنوا قوا أنفسكم وأهليكم نارا

“O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Tahrim 66:6.

Children should be taught who Allah is, that He created and provides, that He alone deserves worship, and that Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger who must be followed. These meanings should then be connected to prayer, du'a, Qur'an, honesty, gratitude, respect for parents, repentance, and conduct.

A masjid should likewise cultivate its community steadily. It should teach 'aqidah, Qur'an, Sunnah, worship, fiqh, manners, family guidance, and the lives of the Prophets and righteous predecessors. Tawhid remains clear as the foundation, and the whole religion grows from it.

Personal and communal reform

Allah said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

“Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Ra'd 13:11.

Real reform begins with the human being who will carry it: what he believes, whom he worships, why he acts, what he obeys, how he treats people, and whether he fears Allah when unseen by creation.

The reforming work therefore has two connected dimensions:

1. **Purification:** removing what corrupts belief, worship, evidence, intention, and method.
2. **Cultivation:** nurturing people upon sound Tawhid, authentic worship, knowledge followed by action, adherence to the Sunnah, sincerity, patience, character, responsibility, and repentance.

External structures, institutions, publications, schools, and programmes can be useful means. They cannot replace the reform of the servant who will operate them. Realized Tawhid cultivates the inward accountability that makes a person fulfil trusts when no one sees him, seek justice because Allah commanded it, and restrain himself from wrongdoing because he will return to Allah.

At the same time, building from Tawhid means carrying the whole religion. Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani رحمه الله said:

بل لا بد لهؤلاء الدعاة أن يحملوا الإسلام كلا لا يتجزأ

“Rather, these callers must carry Islam as a complete whole that cannot be divided.”

Source: Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *al-Tawhid Awwalan ya Du‘at al-Islam*, Arabic PDF hosted by IslamHouse, printed p. 11. The material originated as a recorded answer and was later printed in *Majallat al-Salafiyyah*, issue 4, 1419 AH.

The whole religion is carried, but it is carried in its correct order and upon its correct foundation.

9. Tawhid Remains with the Muslim until Death

Allah said:

واعبد ربك حتى يأتيك اليقين

“Worship your Lord until certainty comes to you.”

Source: Qur’an, al-Hijr 15:99. “Certainty” here means death.

The Muslim does not graduate beyond Tawhid. He progresses deeper into it and builds the whole religion upon it.

He continues to:

- learn Allah’s Names, Attributes, commands, promises, and warnings;
- increase in faith and certainty through the Qur’an;
- renew sincerity before, during, and after deeds;
- improve his prayer as worship of Allah;
- correct love, fear, hope, and reliance;
- protect himself from major and minor shirk;
- follow the Messenger ﷺ more precisely;
- purify his soul from ostentation, pride, self-admiration, envy, and sinful attachment;
- repent from deficiencies and sins;
- fulfil family and social rights as acts of obedience;

- call to Allah upon knowledge and sincerity;
- teach his family the foundation and its fruits;
- and prepare to meet Allah upon Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

من مات لا يشرك بالله شيء دخل الجنة، ومن مات يشرك بالله شيء دخل النار

“Whoever dies without associating anything with Allah enters Paradise, and whoever dies associating something with Allah enters the Fire.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 93. Authentic.

For a sinful person of Tawhid, entry into Paradise may be immediate through Allah’s forgiveness or eventual after punishment. The hadith does not make sins insignificant. It establishes the decisive distinction between dying upon Tawhid and dying upon major shirk.

The servant therefore begins with Tawhid, lives by Tawhid, strengthens his realization of Tawhid, calls to Tawhid, and asks Allah to let him die upon Tawhid.

Conclusion

Tawhid is first because it is the purpose of creation, Allah’s greatest right, the foundation of every Messenger’s call, the first foundation of Islam, and the governing reality of every accepted act of worship.

It is also continual. The Qur’an returns the servant to it. Salah renews it. Du’a expresses it. Dhikr glorifies the One worshipped. Fasting, charity, family duties, lawful work, teaching, and advice become worship through sincerity to Allah and conformity to the Messenger ﷺ. Purification of the soul removes what contradicts or weakens it. Knowledge deepens it. Faith and certainty increase through it. Da’wah begins from it. Reform grows from it.

The two testimonies complete one another: Allah alone is worshipped, and He is worshipped according to the guidance of Muhammad ﷺ. The more faithfully the Messenger is followed, the more correctly Tawhid is enacted; and the more deeply Tawhid is realized, the more sincerely the Messenger is obeyed.

The correct conclusion is therefore not merely that Tawhid comes before other matters chronologically. It is that **every part of Islam must remain connected to Tawhid, nourished by Tawhid, and directed by Tawhid.**

Tawhid is the root. The Sunnah is the revealed way. Worship, knowledge, character, da'wah, family rectification, and communal reform are branches and fruits.

The stronger the servant's realization of Tawhid becomes, the stronger these branches become —by Allah's permission. He does not leave Tawhid behind when he advances. He advances by understanding it more deeply, worshipping Allah more sincerely, following the Messenger ﷺ more completely, and carrying the whole religion upon its sound foundation until he meets Allah.

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