

Loving the Messenger ﷺ Is a Condition of Faith

Allah has bound belief to love, and love to submission. For this reason, the testimony that Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah is not fulfilled by words alone, but by belief, love, obedience, and submission. Faith is not complete until the heart is firmly attached to the Messenger ﷺ in love, acceptance, and compliance.

This love is not an external virtue added to iman, but an internal requirement upon which iman stands. Where this love is absent, faith is negated or deficient. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “No one from amongst you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than his father, his son, and all of the people.” [Bukhari & Muslim] This statement negates true faith until love of the Messenger ﷺ takes precedence over all created attachments, establishing it as a binding condition of iman itself.

Furthermore, Allah says: “But no, by your Lord, they will not believe until they make you judge in all disputes between them, then find in themselves no resistance against your decision, and submit with full submission.” (4:65) This verse establishes a clear sequence: judgment, acceptance, and submission — all of which are rooted in love of the Messenger ﷺ and are inseparable from iman.

La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadan Rasulallah necessitates love, obedience, and submission to the Messenger ﷺ. Whoever affirms it without fulfilling these requirements has not realized its meaning, as the scholars explained that testifying to Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah includes loving him, believing him, obeying him, and submitting to his judgment.

Since loving the Messenger ﷺ is a condition of faith, this love must be manifested and verified, not left as a claim of the heart but proven through following, obedience, and adherence.

Guidance & Love Lies in Following Him ﷺ

Allah says: “And if you obey him, you will be guided.” (24:54) This concise command establishes the entire path: obedience leads to guidance, and guidance leads to safety, rectification, and success. There is no guidance outside of following the Messenger ﷺ, and no love of Allah that is detached from his Sunnah.

Allah says: “Whoever obeys the Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah.” (4:80)

Allah says: “Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have a perfect example for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.” (33:21)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sent as a guide, a mercy, and a clear example. Allah made his way the straight path and his Sunnah the criterion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood. In his Sunnah lies the straight path; in adhering to it lies protection from misguidance; and in remaining firm upon it lies Allah’s pleasure.

Whoever holds fast to the Sunnah holds fast to guidance, and whoever departs from it exposes himself to loss and deviation. Following the Messenger ﷺ is not restricted to specific acts of worship, but encompasses belief, conduct, character, and judgment. Through this comprehensive following, the believer’s heart is preserved, his path is clarified, and his faith remains upright.

Thus, the call is not to emotion, innovation, or desire, but to faith, love, and following. It is a call to submission without resistance, obedience without hesitation, and adherence without addition or alteration. The path is one, the guidance is clear, and the door remains open for whoever seeks Allah through obedience to His Messenger ﷺ.

LOVING ALLAH & HIS MESSENGER ﷺ

Faith and Love: Following the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

Loving the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the path by which love of Allah is proven, manifested, and brought to life through following. Therefore, loving Allah is realized through following and loving His Messenger ﷺ.

This reality is rooted in the testimony of faith itself, and Allah made following His Messenger ﷺ the path by which love is realized and preserved. For this reason, just as the Qur'an cannot be correctly understood or practiced without the Sunnah, the Sunnah stands as divinely revealed guidance by which the Qur'an is explained, applied, and lived.

Allah did not leave love as a vague feeling, but defined it clearly and decisively in revelation, binding it to following and making it measurable by action and adherence. He says: “Say, if you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Qur'an 3:31) This verse establishes a decisive principle: love of Allah is realized only through following His Messenger ﷺ. Through following him, love is affirmed, forgiveness is attained, and guidance is preserved. Whoever claims love while abandoning his guidance has invalidated his own claim, and whoever follows him with sincerity has entered the path of Allah's guidance, love, forgiveness, and mercy

Loving the Messenger ﷺ therefore means preferring his guidance over all other guidance, his judgment over all opinions, and his Sunnah over every desire or custom. Love is not validated by emotion alone, but by aligning belief, worship, character and conduct with what he ﷺ taught and practiced. Every step taken in accordance with his Sunnah strengthens imān and affirms love, and every step taken away from it weakens both.

For this reason, Allah repeatedly tied guidance and success to obedience to His Messenger ﷺ.

Love Is Proven by Obedience and Following

Love of the Messenger ﷺ is inseparable from obedience to his commands and submission to his judgments. Allah did not separate obedience to Him from obedience to His Messenger ﷺ, nor is love detached from compliance. True love is shown by accepting his guidance without resistance, hesitation, or selective adherence.

For this reason, Allah tied obedience to His Messenger ﷺ directly to obedience to Him. He says: “And whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.” (Qur'an 4:80) And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever obeys me has obeyed Allah, and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed Allah.” [Bukhari]

These evidences establish that obedience to the Messenger ﷺ is obedience to Allah Himself, and that love of Allah cannot be separated from obedience to His Messenger ﷺ. Loving him ﷺ therefore necessitates obeying him, submitting to his commands, avoiding what he forbade, and accepting his judgments without resistance or hesitation. This is how love becomes truth, faith becomes sound, and the servant walks upon a clear and protected path.

Allah says: “It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should have any choice in their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has clearly gone astray.” (33:36)

The righteous Salaf understood this clearly. Imam Malik رحمه الله said: “Everyone's statement may be accepted or rejected except the statement of the occupant of this grave,” and he pointed to the grave of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Through obedience to the Messenger ﷺ, love of Allah becomes real, faith is preserved, and the believer walks upon clarity and safety.

The Salaf's Love: Following Without Innovation

The righteous Salaf preserved their love for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by adhering strictly to his Sunnah and avoiding every form of innovation. They understood that true love is safeguarded by restraint, submission, and conformity, not by addition, alteration, or personal desire.

For this reason, they held fast to following and warned against innovation, knowing that the Sunnah is complete and sufficient. ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud رضي الله عنه said: “Follow and do not innovate, for you have been sufficed.” In this statement is a decisive principle: sufficiency lies in following, and safety lies in restraint. Innovation was never regarded by the Salaf as an expression of love, but as a departure from it. Love that is not governed by the Sunnah is exposed to distortion, while love that remains bound to following is preserved and protected.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever introduces into this affair of ours that which is not from it, it is rejected.” [Bukhari & Muslim] This establishes that acceptance is tied to conformity, and that the path of love is the path of adherence, not invention. Thus, the Salaf's love for the Messenger ﷺ was manifested through careful following, submission without resistance, and restraint from innovation. By remaining upon the Sunnah as it was understood and practiced, they preserved their faith, true love, and remained upon the clear and safe path. Upon this path, Allah declared His pleasure.

Allah says: “And the first forerunners among the Muhajirun and the Ansar, and those who followed them with excellence — Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great success.” (9:100)