



Using the Quran and Sunnah to Support an Opinion

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Without a doubt, the use of verses from the Quran and hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, can strengthen a person's argument and give what they are saying added credibility, but is their inclusion enough to validate that point of view? When we see a connection between the verse or hadith and the person's opinion, is it then enough? These are important questions, especially because the inclusion of Quran and hadith references gives the person's opinion a religious connection; that it is something Allah wants of us.

A correctly quoted verse is not always correctly understood or correctly used to derive meaning. Let's take the following example.

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ – سورة التوبة 34

“Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them tidings of a painful punishment” – Al Quran 9:34

A person may present the opinion that a person may not keep any savings. Instead they should spend whatever money comes their way, first on their necessities, and then to spend in charity. If they use this verse to support their opinion, a listener would be able to see the connection. If the listener researched the verse they would indeed find that it is a verse from the Quran. Does this necessitate that their opinion is correct? No, it doesn't. In fact the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, stated that any amount of wealth for which the *Zakat* has been paid is not encompassed in this verse.

Here is an example hadith. The Prophet peace and blessings upon him is reported to have said:

“لا صلاة بحضرة طعام، ولا وهو يُدافِعُهُ الأُحْبَابُ” – صحيح مسلم

“There is no prayer in the presence of (prepared food), nor is their prayer for the person who needs to relieve himself” – Sahih Muslim

If I were to present the opinion that if a person prays in the presence of prepared food that their prayer is invalid, this hadith might support my opinion. If you were to research the hadith to determine whether it was authentic you would find that it is authentic and is narrated in Sahih Muslim. Does this necessitate that my opinion is correct? The answer is again no. The prayer is valid. The hadith is advice not to pray in these two circumstances as the person who does so is likely to be less focused on the prayer and as such will not attain the intended benefit from the prayer.



It is not difficult for a person to misuse any quote, religious or otherwise from any authority. People will do this to promote or push an agenda they may have. This can often involve sacrifices (of money, effort, time, and can even involve putting the person's life at risk), so it is of vital importance for us to be more informed on how to receive opinions, including religious opinions.

We are taught in the Quran about the wrong ways in which some people approached religious scriptures in the past. Allah presents us with these examples so that we can take heed and avoid making the same mistakes:

1. Changing the meaning:

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ – سورة البقرة 75

“Do you expect them to be true to you, though a group of them would hear the word of Allah then knowingly corrupt it after understanding it?” – Al Quran 2:75

مَنْ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ – سورة النساء 46

“There are some among those who claim penitence¹ who displace words from their context...” - Al Quran 4:46

2. Ignoring the message and employing wishful thinking:

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيٍّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ – سورة البقرة 78

“And among them are the illiterate who know nothing about the Scripture except lies, and so they (wishfully) speculate.” – Al Quran 2:78

3. Falsely attributing something to Allah:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيُشْنَرُوا بِهِ – ثُمَّ قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ – سورة البقرة 79

“So woe to those who distort the Scripture with their own hands then say, “This is from Allah”—seeking a fleeting gain! So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned.” – Al Quran 2:79

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلَالَةَ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ – سورة النساء 44

“Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scriptures yet trade it for misguidance and wish to see you deviate from the (Right) Path?” – Al Quran 4:44

¹ The Arabic word “Haadu” has numerous meanings, for the context of this article, the meaning that refers to “penitence” has been chosen. We will not go into the other meanings of this word in this treatise.
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4. Believing in a portion of the scripture and disbelieving in another portion:

أَفْتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ - سورة البقرة 85

“Do you believe in some of the Scripture and reject the rest?” – Al Quran: 2:85

Risk Mitigation

A good way to reduce the risk of being influenced by wrong opinions is to stay connected with qualified, reputed Sheikhs, ideally those who make themselves available to the people and are open to having their opinions scrutinised. A discussion of what makes a good Sheikh is a topic I may write about in a future article.

Here is a good list of questions to consider when being presented with a “religious” opinion:

- Is the opinion in line with a traditional understanding of the faith?
- Is there a scholarly consensus (*ijma'*) on this matter or is the consensus on a contrary understanding?
- Is the person who is making the claim connected with reputed Sheikhs?
- Does the opinion require a stretch of the imagination or “mental gymnastics” to understand?
- Are they attributing meanings to the verses and hadiths that do not conform with the language conventions of the people at the time of the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him?
- Is the opinion accepted by any of the 4 accepted schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i or Hanbali)?
- Is the opinion supported in the Seerah of the Prophet peace and blessings upon him?

We ask Allah to guide us to what is right and true, and to guide us to understand His message.

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