

Gracious Argumentation September 18, 2026

ud`‘u ilā sabīli rabbika bil-ḥik`mati wal-maw‘izati l-ḥasanati wajādil`hum billatī hiya aḥsan - Sadaqallah (Surah An Nahl 16:125)

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious

Our backgrounds, cultures, languages, educations, and traumas shape the way we view the world. We process the same information, yet identical events provide different interpretations. Everyone sees the world differently, so it is only natural that we disagree on almost everything. Subjective viewpoints make disagreements virtually unavoidable. There is a purpose and a blessing in having diverse perspectives. Different points of views reduce our blind spots, it is like having multiple mirrors to view what lies behind us. Contrasting experiences and ideas enhances creativity, help us discover alternative paths, and make us understand why others see things differently. Not relying on a single mental model helps us to adapt to unexpected events faster.

Allahu Ta'ala created us with diverse backgrounds and revealed His divine purpose in Surah Al-Hujurat, stating: “Oh mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.” (49:13) Diversity in language, culture, ethnicity, and skin color creates a divine bridge to foster recognition and mutual connection. It allows human beings to interact, share experiences, and learn from each other's unique perspectives. That is the meaning of knowing one another. Allah-u Ta’ala also explicitly clarifies that physical differences, lineage, or national backgrounds do not make anyone superior. The only true measure of honor, dignity, and nobility before Allah is personal righteousness and God-consciousness.

While disagreements are natural and inevitable, being able to disagree with a dignified stance, open our minds to think critically, without being argumentative, stubborn, or arrogant is very difficult. One of the most difficult challenges for each one of us is being able to practice forbearance (*hilm*) in moments of anger and disagreement. Whether it be with our family, friends, community members or those who oppose our faith, we often find ourselves in situations where anger and argumentation can creep in, sour our relationship and reduce our inner joy.

Our ego urges us to argue for victory, convincing us that proving a point is worth any price. Yet, true strength is not found in dominating a debate, but in mastering ourselves. What ultimately preserves our inner peace, guards our dignity, and keeps bitterness from taking root in our relationships is learning to restrain this overwhelming desire to win. Winning an argument rarely wins a mind, and it almost never heals a soul. When we look back on our lives, we will not remember the debates we won. We will remember the relationships we kept intact. After all, how many hearts have we broken, and how many souls have we alienated, simply to win an argument?

There is a distinction between healthy praiseworthy constructive debate, and blameworthy destructive argumentation. In a healthy debate, the purpose is seeking truth rather than seeking victory. The ultimate objective is for the truth to stand clear, regardless of who gets the credit. A perfect example of this is Imam al-Shafi'i, who declared that he never debated anyone without making *du'a* (supplication) that Allah would place the truth on his opponent's tongue during discussion. When truth is the only goal, defeat gives way to discovery, leaving no room for ego; demeaning others becomes impossible.

A blameworthy destructive argument, on the other hand, is driven by pride and an inability to accept being wrong. In its worst form, it manifests as arguing for something false just to be right, even when knowing it is not the truth. Rasulallah (saws) said that the person most hated by Allah is the most fierce, stubborn, and argumentative one who constantly insists on getting the last word, who uses argumentation to evade accepting the truth. He warned against using speech just to dominate others, noting that Allah despises a person who artificially wraps their tongue around words to argue, just like a cow wraps its tongue around straw.

Healthy dialogue relies on three aspects: wisdom, beautiful preaching, and –above all– knowing when to stop. True maturity belongs to those who resist the urge to always win. It belongs to those who set aside pride, quiet their egos, and possess the courage to simply let things go. The Prophet (saws) guaranteed a place in Jannah for the one who abandons an argument, even when they are completely right. Think about it: How often do we clash with a spouse or friend, or a loved one to get the final word? But yielding isn't losing. Stepping back isn't a weakness. It takes profound humility to realize that peace in our relationships is far more valuable than the satisfaction of being right.

How do we know if our behavior truly reflects the guidance of the Messenger of Allah (saws)? We must examine our hearts in the heat of a debate. We must ask:

- Are we searching for the truth—regardless of who gets the credit—or are we just trying to dominate and prove our superiority?
- Do we submit to the truth the moment evidence is presented, or do we dodge and make excuses to protect our pride?
- When the other person speaks, are we genuinely listening to understand, or are we just framing our next counter-argument?
- Are we staying focused, or dragging in petty, irrelevant details just to derail their point?
- Can we master our emotions and resist that burning urge to get the final word?

Above all, the Prophetic model calls us to walk away from conflict to safeguard our relationships. Preserving mutual respect with our spouses, families, and communities matters vastly more than winning an argument.

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi