

## WITH THE SHAYKH



### ***Dbikr in Congregation***

Shaykh ‘Abd Allah Bin Bayyah<sup>1</sup>

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The question, from Sri Lanka, inquires about a common practice in the country of observing optional prayers and reciting the Qur’an on a Thursday night, between the Maghrib and ‘Ishā’ prayers, because of it being the night of Jumu‘ah. Is such a practice valid or is it an innovation?

#### ***In the Name of Allah, All-Merciful, Bestower of Mercy***

This is an issue concerning which the scholars differ over. Some deem that collectively reciting Qur’an or making *dbikr* in congregation is an innovation (*bid‘ab*). Others hold that these are good practices; each depending on certain proofs [to validate their view]. So there are those that rely on the statement of Ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, that “You have come with an odious innovation and do you have greater knowledge than the Companions of Muhammad?” Others depend upon the apparent meaning of the authentic hadith related by Ibn ‘Abbās, may Allah be pleased with him, which states: “No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, without tranquility descending upon them, mercy enveloping them, the angels surrounding them, and Allah making mention of them amongst those who are with Him.” Recorded by Muslim, no.2699. The apparent meaning of the hadith indicating the permissibility of collectively reciting the Qur’an and performing *dbikr*.

It is related that [Imam] al-Awzā‘ī was asked about reciting and studying the Qur’an collectively after the morning prayer. He replied: “There is nothing wrong with it.” And he said: “Ḥassān ibn ‘Aṭīyyah informed me that the first person to introduce the practice was Hishām ibn Ismā‘īl al-Makhzūmī during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Marwān. People then took this practice from him.” Hence, the issue is one about which scholars differ. Some rebuked Hishām for this, such as Imām Mālik, may Allah have mercy upon him; while others said: “There is nothing wrong with it.” Ḥarb [al-Kirmānī] mentions that he observed the people of Damascus, Hama and Basra gather together to collectively recite Qur’an after the morning prayer. However, the Syrians would collectively recite one chapter of the Qur’an loudly, all in unison; whereas the Basrans and Makkans would recite the Qur’an congregationally, but one of them would recite aloud ten verses while the rest listened, then another would recite aloud the next ten verses while the others listened, and so on, until the whole chapter was completed. Ḥarb then said: “All of this is excellent.” This issue can be referred back to Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī’s *Jāmi‘ al-‘Ulūm wa’l-Ḥikam*.<sup>2</sup> Hence the issue is one about which scholars differ.

As for the situation of Sri Lanka, I lean towards the view that it [i.e. what they are doing] is good. I once visited the country and found its people worshipping idols. There wasn’t anywhere except that an idol had been erected which people took recourse to. Given this, that the Muslims gather at a specific time

in order to make *dhikr* of Allah and recite the Book of Allah, or just to make *dhikr* of Allah - provided that such a gathering does not involve any prohibited act; such as free-mixing, dancing, or any other evil - then this is fine. It is important not to make things too restricted for people.



#### **ENDNOTES**

1. From [www.binbayyah.net](http://www.binbayyah.net) (trans. Surkheel Sharif).
2. *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wa'l-Ḥikam* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1998), 2:301-3.