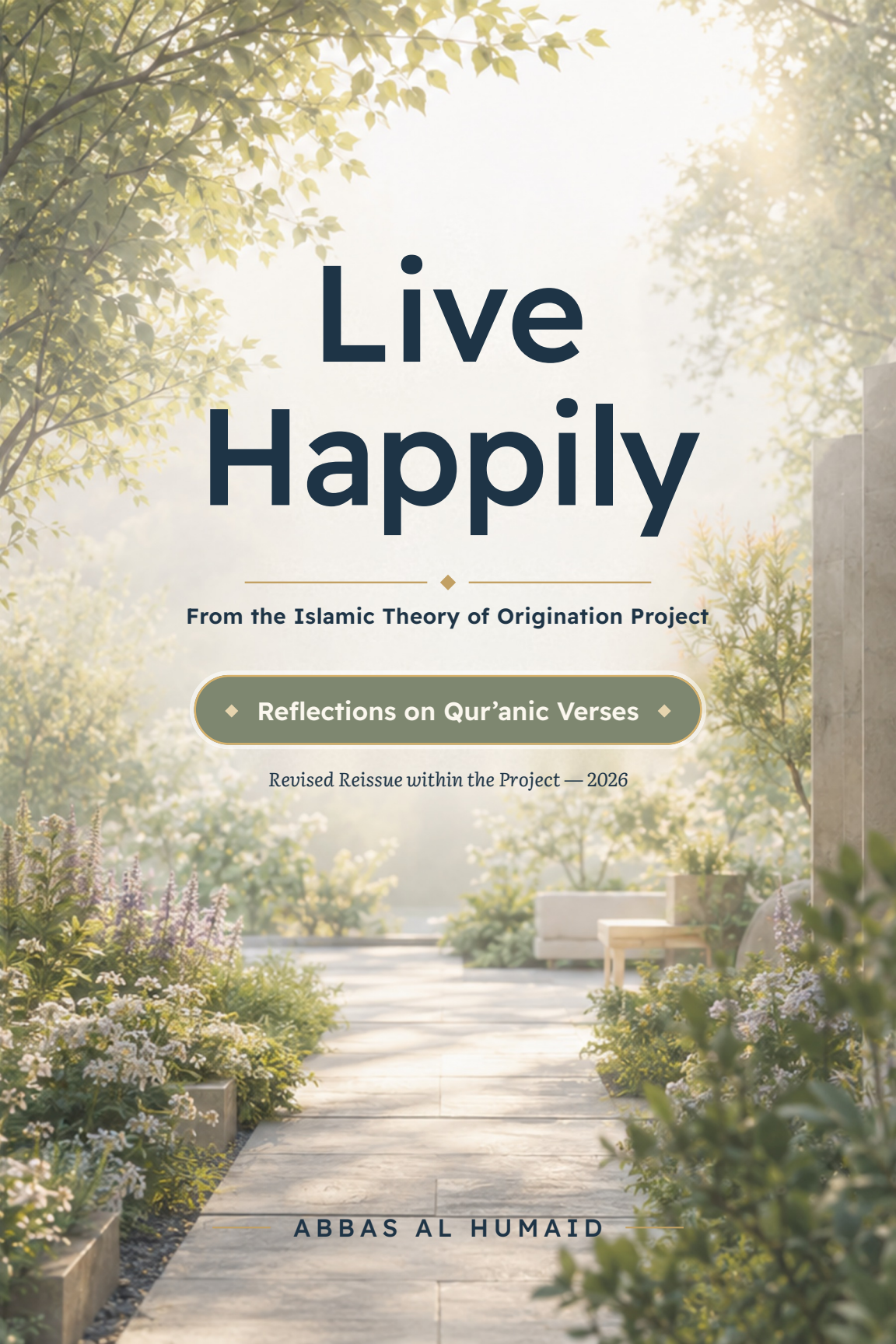




Live Happily

From the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

◆ Reflections on Qur'anic Verses ◆

Revised Reissue within the Project — 2026

ABBAS AL HUMAID

Live Happily



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Reflections on Qur'anic Verses

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The Islamic Theory of Origination Project

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Within the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

The Islamic Theory of Origination is a project of interpretive inquiry within the Islamic worldview. It explores human becoming, our movement through existence, our growth, conduct and sense of mission. As a work of human interpretation, it is not Islam itself, and does not replace creed, jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis or the specialised sciences. Nor is it a single book: it is an integrated body of six books, each with its own question, purpose and voice. They complement one another without duplicating one another's role.

A MAP OF THE SIX BOOKS

- 1 **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — The worldview foundation and the project's fuller account of the cosmos.
- 2 **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — The governing reference text, including the Reader's Guide and reference glossary.
- 3 **The Immortal Self** — The volume that develops the model of the human being and its unfolding journey.
- 4 **No Limits** — The accessible introduction to the laws and the principal setting for comparative critique.
- 5 **Live Happily** — The path into Qur'anic contemplation and its practice in daily life.
- 6 **The Journey of a Toiler** — The project's ideas embodied in narrative.

Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview opens with a brief reading map. Its appendices contain an accessible reference glossary, followed by a detailed Reader's Guide to the project, its books and possible reading paths. The glossary and guide belong to the reference volume itself; they are neither a separate volume nor a seventh book within this six-book project.

THIS BOOK'S PLACE IN THE PROJECT

Live Happily brings Qur'anic contemplation into everyday life. It connects selected verses from Surahs al-Isra' and al-Kahf with the questions we face and the ways we live, turning each reflection into a practical recommendation that can be revisited through self-examination.

Contents



Dear Reader.....	1
Before You Begin.....	3
How to Use This Book.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Surah al-Isra'.....	6
A Pause for Review after Surah al-Isra'	53
Surah al-Kahf.....	55
A Pause for Review after Surah al-Kahf.....	112
Source Notes and Clarifications.....	114
Where to Read Next.....	122
A Letter from the Author	123
Making Knowledge Accessible.....	124
About the Author.....	125
Books in the Islamic Theory of Origination Project.....	127

Dear Reader,

As the world grows more unsettled, the pace of life quickens, and challenges and hardships bear down upon us, we increasingly need something to light the way and help us walk it with awareness, hope and tranquillity.

God revealed the Qur'an to guide us towards what is good for us, to heal what lies within our hearts, and to call us to purify ourselves. In *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Imam 'Alī, peace be upon him, says: "Know that this Qur'an is the counsellor who never deceives and the guide who never leads astray ... Seek in it a cure for your ailments ... Seek its counsel concerning yourselves, and question your own opinions in its light."¹

Yet we may read the Qur'an and go on as though we had never heard it. Its words pass over our tongues without touching our decisions or relationships. We may seek help in improving our lives—a worthwhile pursuit—yet overlook the question that comes before it: where are we going, and to what end do we work?

This is what led me to read selected verses from Surahs al-Isra' and al-Kahf slowly and reflectively, drawing on Qur'anic commentaries in search of insights that might illuminate our lives. I have tried to keep the language simple and the expression concise, and to follow each reflection with a recommendation that connects understanding with something we can put into practice.

I have not addressed every verse, nor tried to encompass all the meanings of those I have chosen. Whatever beautiful meaning I have missed reflects the limits of my knowledge and

understanding. My hope is that an insight from these pages will accompany you into your day, finding expression in your work, your words or your relationship with someone you love.

The happiness I invite you to seek is not a life untouched by sorrow. It is a life with a clear direction, in which the self grows in truth and servanthood, is sustained by faith in its striving and hope, and draws on the knowledge and help God has made available. Let us read slowly, and let a verse leave an imprint that lasts beyond the moment of reading.



Before You Begin

These are human reflections illuminated by the Qur'an, not a comprehensive commentary or an infallible account. I distinguish between the words of the verse, the interpretations handed down to us, and what I draw from it for our lives. The text may carry other meanings that a particular reflection does not address.

When I draw on concepts from the Islamic Theory of Origination Project, I am using an interpretive framework open to revision. I do not offer it in place of the Qur'an, its commentaries or the specialised sciences. Readers seeking fuller explanations of the terms can turn to the project's reference volume and its glossary.

The recommendations here are suggested ways of reflecting and acting, not new religious obligations. Choose what suits your knowledge, capacity and circumstances, and seek clarification where you are unsure. Differences in emotional response, or a slow pace of progress, are not a verdict on a person's worth or the sincerity of their faith.

Faith may coexist with sorrow or illness and with a need for treatment and support. Trust in God's wisdom does not mean that we know the hidden purpose of every event, that we should remain silent about injustice, or that we may neglect an opportunity to put things right. We make use of the means available to us, safeguard rights, and place our hope in what God holds in store.

Verse references appear alongside the passages quoted; source notes and clarifications are collected at the end of the book. Finding a report in its source does not, by itself, establish the soundness of its chain of transmission. Where a quotation required clarification of its status or the limits of what may be inferred from it, I have explained this in the relevant note.

How to Use This Book

Read slowly. Set aside, when you can, about ten minutes to read a verse and its reflection. You do not have to finish one reflection each day, or move on to the next before its meaning has had time to settle.

Ask: what have I understood? Identify the insight that caught your attention, and distinguish the meaning of the verse from the proposed application. Where something is unclear, consult a reliable commentary or someone with the relevant knowledge.

Then ask: what has this shown me about myself? Notice a habit, an inclination, or a moment when you were truthful or fell short, without making excuses or being harsh with yourself. “A Moment of Self-Reflection” offers an optional question to ponder; it is neither a test nor a measure of faith.

Choose: what will I do? Begin with one clear step within your capacity. Do not turn all the book’s recommendations into a daily list that weighs you down. It is enough for one insight to become a more truthful action in your life.

Review with gentleness and honesty. At the end of your day, ask: what did I do? What helped or hindered me? What needs to change? Use a tick to mark a particular action as complete, not to pass judgement on yourself. Do not count as a failure something you had no opportunity to do.

Pause to see the path you are taking. Return from time to time to the steps you have chosen, using the review pauses after each surah. Be grateful for what has been achieved, put right what needs attention, and adjust your next step as circumstances change. The purpose is to remain faithful to truth, not to fill in boxes.

Abbas Al Humaid

Acknowledgements



My heartfelt thanks go to my son Muhammad, whose conversations with me inspired the idea for this book. They drew my attention to the importance of returning to the Qur'an for guidance, and of connecting its meanings with our lives and our pursuit of goodness and tranquillity. "In truth We sent it down, and in truth it descended" (al-Isra' 17:105).

I am also deeply grateful to Ali Ahmad Muhammad, who reviewed the language of the Arabic book.





Surah al-Isra'

Live Happily

◆

“Glory be to him who took his servant by night
from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque.”

al-Isra' 17:1

In describing the exalted standing of our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, God calls him his servant. This invites us to recognise that servanthood to God does not diminish human dignity. It is an end towards which we rise through knowledge, love and obedience. “I created jinn and humankind only that they might worship me” (al-Dhariyat 51:56).

We depend upon God for our very existence. Our conscious servanthood, however, becomes evident when we know him, turn towards him and respond to him. Simply being God's creatures does not mean that we have fulfilled our duty to worship him.



IN PRACTICE

Humble yourself before God, and make his pleasure the purpose of your life, not merely a means of feeling at ease. Once you have established that something is his command, respond to it even when you do not fully understand its wisdom. At the same time, examine what is attributed to religion and ask about what you do not understand. Submission to God does not mean setting reason aside or accepting every claim made in his name.

“We gave Moses the Book and made it
a guide for the Children of Israel:
‘Take no guardian besides me.’”

al-Isra' 17:2

Faith in God is the aim of all the prophets' messages. It calls us to trust in him and to place our hearts' absolute reliance on no one else.

Trust in God does not mean abandoning practical means, effort or planning. It supports our striving and steadies the heart in the face of fear and tension. We use the means available, recognise their limits, and trust in God without making the fulfilment of our wishes a condition of that trust.



IN PRACTICE

Plan for what you seek, do what you can, and ask for help from those able to give it, seeking God's help throughout. When your options narrow, do not take a loss as evidence that he has abandoned you. He is the one who “has prescribed mercy for himself” (al-An'am 6:12). Reconsider your plan, and keep the door of hope open.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What practical step can I take now, and what outcome am I exhausting myself trying to guarantee?

“Descendants of those We carried with Noah! He was indeed a grateful servant.”

al-Isra' 17:3

The verse recalls Noah, peace be upon him, and describes him as a grateful servant. It invites us to remember blessings that we can neither bring into being nor sustain on our own.

God's ownership of us is unlike the conventional forms of ownership in this world. He is our Creator; he sustains our existence, and every gift we enjoy comes from him. Our innate nature (*fitra*) calls us to recognise the Giver and thank him. Yet we need to keep this awareness alive and respond faithfully to it; heedlessness or conceit may obscure it.

When gratitude is joined with love, worship is no longer a burden to get through. It becomes an encounter with the one we love, and a response to the one worthy of our worship.



IN PRACTICE

Cultivate gratitude and love for God. Reflect on his blessings in your life, and give your thanks practical expression: preserve a blessing, use it well, or let someone else benefit from it. Seek the knowledge that deepens your love for him. We worship him because he is our Lord and worthy of worship, and through his grace we hope for tranquillity of heart and a good end.

“If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, it is against yourselves.”

al-Isra' 17:7

This verse brings us back to our responsibility: the fruit of our goodness and the consequences of our wrongdoing return to us, even when the benefit or harm of an action reaches others. We must not harm someone and then imagine that the harm has left our own selves untouched.²

Desire, prejudice or someone else's mistreatment may prompt you to respond badly. The harm you suffer may also narrow your freedom to choose. Look honestly at what was within your capacity: do not hold yourself responsible for what you could not control, and do not use another person's wrongdoing to excuse a wrong of your own that you could have avoided.



IN PRACTICE

Watch your actions and examine yourself with honesty and gentleness. When you recognise that you have wronged someone, do not stop at regret. Apologise, restore what is due, and repair whatever you can. Doing good for yourself cannot be separated from treating others justly.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Have I done no more than feel sorry for a wrong, even though I could still repair some of the harm it caused?

“This Qur’an guides to the way
that is most upright.”

al-Isra’ 17:9

Self-development books seek to help people succeed and improve their lives. They may contain useful knowledge and experience worth drawing on. But a means does not, by itself, determine an end: why do I seek success, at what cost, and for what kind of life am I preparing myself?

Here the Qur’an’s guidance provides a point of reference for our direction, values and conduct. It does not reduce a human being to worldly achievement; it connects our striving with servanthood to God, responsibility towards others and our ultimate return to him.



IN PRACTICE

Let the Qur’an’s guidance be the measure of your purposes, values and conduct. Draw on sound knowledge and trustworthy experience, while examining the assumptions they carry. Do not reject knowledge simply because the person offering it differs from you in religion, or follow an idea merely because it is popular. Ask what evidence supports it, what its limits are, and how it relates to the good you seek.

“And it gives good news to the believers who do righteous deeds that theirs will be a great reward.”

al-Isra' 17:9

The verse brings faith and righteous action together, opening the door to glad tidings of a great reward. Faith is not left as a claim with no visible effect on life, nor is action reduced to its outward form, detached from intention and direction.

This good news calls us to hope and action, not to complacency or an end to self-examination. Anyone who recognises a shortcoming should respond by repenting and putting right what they can, rather than despairing of God's mercy.



IN PRACTICE

Each evening, reflect on how your faith found expression during the day, and on the good you did within your family, community or work. Thank God for what he enabled you to do, and choose one area in which you can do better tomorrow.

“The human being prays for evil as he prays for good; the human being is ever hasty.”

al-Isra' 17:11

In a moment of anger, haste may lead someone to pray for harm to themselves, their family or their possessions, as though they were asking for good. This is one of the meanings the commentators mention here.³ Another form of haste is to insist on something whose consequences we do not know, thinking it good when it is harmful to us. The Qur'an reminds us of the limits of our knowledge: “You may dislike something that is good for you, and you may love something that is bad for you. God knows, and you do not know” (al-Baqarah 2:216).



IN PRACTICE

Pause when you are angry, and do not persist in praying against yourself or others. Before an important decision, write down the benefits and harms you foresee, and consult those with relevant experience. Practise this until deliberation becomes a habit.

When something you have worked for does not come about, do not take an unfulfilled wish to mean that all good has passed you by. Trust in God's wisdom, review the causes you can understand, and keep striving. There may be consequences you cannot yet see.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What decision am I rushing into, and what information should I check before making it?

“We made the night and the day two signs. We effaced the sign of the night and made the sign of the day illuminating, so that you may seek bounty from your Lord.”

al-Isra' 17:12

The verse draws our attention to the succession of night and day and the opportunity to seek God's bounty. It invites us to reflect on the relationship between the order of life that makes our striving possible and the guidance that directs it.

We need both: to understand the patterns and conditions within which our work takes place, and to be guided by the truth that gives it direction. Striving requires knowledge of causes; striving well also requires a sound purpose.



IN PRACTICE

Combine the use of practical means with faithfulness to the divine guidance you have come to know. Learn, plan, work skilfully, and rest your body when it needs rest. Keep God's pleasure before you. Just as knowing the rules of a game is not enough to win it, a good intention cannot replace learning what a task requires and doing it well.

“For every human being We have fastened their fate about their neck, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring forth for them a book they will find laid open. ‘Read your book. Today your own self is enough to call you to account.’ Whoever follows guidance does so for their own good, and whoever goes astray does so against themselves. No bearer of burdens bears another’s burden.”

al-Isra’ 17:13–15

The blessings and hardships that befall you have real effects on your life. Injustice harms, loss hurts, and kindness helps. Yet your response to what happens—within the limits of your knowledge, choice and capacity—also helps shape your self and the record of your deeds.

You are not accountable for someone else's sin, and being harmed does not make you guilty. Look instead at what lies within your power: how will you respond to what has happened, prevent harm, seek help or safeguard a right?

The Hereafter discloses the value and consequences of our actions, without separating recompense from God's justice, mercy and forgiveness.



IN PRACTICE

Take care to do what you would be glad to read in your book on the Day of Resurrection. Let concern for your own actions move you to put things right, not to minimise what has happened to you or to someone else. This life is a time for serious action, however short it is beside the life to come.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What happened to me without my choosing it, and what response is now within my power and responsibility?

“When We intend to destroy a town, We command those living in luxury within it, but they transgress there. Then the decree against it becomes due, and We destroy it utterly.”

al-Isra' 17:16

The verse warns against luxury when it is accompanied by transgression and corruption. The problem is not the mere possession of wealth, but the misuse of blessings, until a life of plenty becomes a life heedless of responsibility.⁴

One reflection suggested here is that corruption among those with greater power and influence may also affect others. Wealth or status alone is therefore no proof of a person's goodness or corruption. What matters is their integrity, their actions and the effects of both.



IN PRACTICE

Consider how you use the money, authority or influence entrusted to you. When assigning work to someone else, assess their competence and integrity on the evidence available, rather than on an impressive appearance. “The best one you can hire is the strong and trustworthy” (al-Qasas 28:26).

“Whoever desires the fleeting life, We hasten within it whatever We will for whomever We intend. Then We appoint Hell for them, to burn in it, condemned and rejected. But whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it as it should be striven for, while being a believer—the striving of such people is gratefully received.”

al-Isra' 17:18–19

These two verses present contrasting lives: that of someone who seeks the fleeting world as the purpose of existence, and that of someone who desires the Hereafter and strives for it as a believer, living in this world with God's pleasure before them.

The verse does not say that everyone who seeks this world receives what they want; the gift is subject to God's will. As for the one who strives for the Hereafter, their striving is described as gratefully received: it is not lost with God, who rewards it from his bounty. What hope there is in knowing that our striving is seen by the one with whom no good is ever lost.⁵



IN PRACTICE

Do not make seeking the Hereafter an excuse to neglect worldly affairs. Let it be the goal that directs your work in this life. Earn your livelihood, practise your profession well, and benefit others without pursuing gain through disobedience. Take heart in God's bounty, while recognising that the right purpose does not guarantee every worldly outcome you desire.

“To each We give—these
and those—from the gift of your Lord.
The gift of your Lord is not withheld.”

al-Isra' 17:20

God extends his gifts to both groups. The means of livelihood and life do not belong to believers alone, and abundant wealth does not, by itself, reveal a person's standing with God.

No one should imagine that faith compensates for failing to seek a livelihood, or that someone of a different religion cannot benefit from worldly means. Even so, outcomes do not depend on effort alone. Opportunities, circumstances and the actions of others also matter; not every deprivation is evidence of laziness.



IN PRACTICE

Seek God's bounty by working in accordance with the patterns that govern life, while remaining faithful to the guidance he has prescribed. Make your work a means of drawing near to him and worshipping him, not an activity detached from your purpose.

“See how We have favoured some above others.
Yet the Hereafter is greater in degrees and greater
in distinction.”

al-Isra' 17:21

The verse draws our attention to differences in degree, then reminds us that the Hereafter is greater in degrees and distinction. What we know of differences in this world cannot encompass the greatness of the life ahead.

We enter this world with much that we did not choose. Through our choices and actions, we then help shape what we become. This responsibility is real, but it does not make us independent of God's sustaining support or turn our destinies into a mechanical outcome detached from his justice, mercy and forgiveness.



IN PRACTICE

Do not sacrifice what lasts for a passing pleasure, or to escape a hardship you can bear. When you stumble, do not treat that moment as a final verdict on your destiny. Turn back to God, repair what you can, and continue working in hope of his mercy.

“Do not set up another god beside God, lest you find yourself condemned and forsaken.”

al-Isra' 17:22

The verse forbids setting up another god beside God, turning the heart back to his oneness and worship. A person may acknowledge this truth, then be overcome by heedlessness and act as though some worldly cause held independent power over their affairs.

Yet taking practical steps and seeking other people's help are not, in themselves, worship of anything other than God. We need to examine the place these means occupy in our hearts, and whether we abandon what is right to please someone we believe has the power to help or harm us.



IN PRACTICE

Use the means available to you, plan, and work towards your goals, remembering that God is the Cause of causes and that they have no power independent of him. Say “God willing” when speaking of what you intend, mindful of its meaning rather than merely repeating the words. “Never say of anything, ‘I shall do this tomorrow,’ without adding, ‘If God wills’” (al-Kahf 18:23–24).

“Your Lord has decreed that you
worship none but him, and that you
treat your parents with kindness.”

al-Isra' 17:23

Affirming God's oneness cannot be separated from righteous action, good conduct and kindness towards others. The Qur'an gives parents particular emphasis, joining kindness to them with the worship of God, just as it commands gratitude to them alongside gratitude to him: “Give thanks to me and to your parents” (Luqman 31:14).

Linking the two shows how much we owe our parents; it does not put their claim on a par with God's. Honouring them does not depend on their agreeing with our wishes, but neither does it mean obeying them in wrongdoing or failing to protect ourselves from harm. Treating them well can go hand in hand with refusing to do wrong (Luqman 31:15).



IN PRACTICE

Make room in your day or week to honour your parents: through a call, an act of service, a prayer, or the fulfilment of a right still due to them. When the relationship is painful, seek wise counsel that helps you honour them while protecting your safety and upholding rights.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

How can I honour my parents in my present circumstances, without neglecting them or demanding of myself what I cannot do?

“The wasteful are brothers of the devils, and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.”

al-Isra' 17:27

The Qur'an firmly condemns wastefulness because it spoils a blessing and squanders what could benefit both ourselves and others. Not every expenditure on comfort or beauty is wasteful. The measure is the purpose and extent of the spending, and the rights it may compromise.

Social appearances, a title or the promise of distinction may tempt us to spend in order to maintain an image rather than meet a real need. At such moments, desire needs examination, not unquestioning acceptance of everything advertising promises.



IN PRACTICE

Live moderately, and enjoy what God has made lawful without excess. Before buying something that will add to your burdens, ask yourself: do I need this, or am I buying an image I want others to see? Do not let a passing desire displace an obligation or a more important need.

“If you turn away from them while seeking a mercy from your Lord for which you hope, then speak to them a gentle word.”

al-Isra' 17:28

Even when you cannot give, there is still room for a kind word. The verse calls us to gentle speech when we have nothing to offer: to preserve the dignity of the person asking, and address them with warmth and respect, without making them feel beholden to us or promising what we know we cannot provide.



IN PRACTICE

When you cannot meet someone's request for money, employment or help, explain this kindly. If you know of another way for them to get help, point them towards it. Even when you cannot give what they ask, let them leave the encounter with their dignity intact.

“Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor stretch it out without restraint, lest you be left blamed and depleted.”

al-Isra' 17:29

This verse establishes moderation in spending, between miserliness and spending that exhausts what we possess. It calls us to use money in a way that meets our needs and leaves room for generosity.

It also helps us examine our financial habits without treating every financial setback as evidence of wastefulness. Difficulties may arise from illness, loss of income or circumstances beyond our control.



IN PRACTICE

Balance your income against your commitments and the needs of those who depend on you. Set aside an amount for giving that you can sustain. Review what you buy to keep up appearances or because you compare yourself with others. When difficulties arise, seek advice and reorder your financial commitments as best you can. Do not add to your hardship by blaming yourself without distinguishing cause from consequence.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What expenditure could I reconsider without compromising an essential need or the rights of someone who depends on me?

“Your Lord grants abundant provision to whomever he wills and restricts it. He is fully aware of his servants and sees them all.”

al-Isra' 17:30

The verse reminds us that, whether God grants abundant provision or restricts it, he does so with full knowledge of his servants. What we seek may seem entirely good, only for its consequences to reveal aspects we had not known.

But we do not fully understand the wisdom behind each instance of abundance or deprivation. We must not take poverty as evidence of someone's bad character, or prosperity as proof that God is pleased with them. Trust in God preserves hope; it does not excuse us from understanding causes or putting right what we can.



IN PRACTICE

You may be denied something you worked for, or face a hardship you did not expect. Allow yourself to grieve, but do not close the door of hope. Keep working to improve your circumstances, and ask for help when you need it. You do not have to know the wisdom behind everything that has happened in order to trust in God's justice and mercy.

“Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of.
Hearing, sight and the heart—you will be called to
account for them all.”

al-Isra' 17:36

Each day brings an immense flow of news and information. We may form opinions or pass on reports without first checking them, harming a reputation, a relationship or someone's interests.

The verse forbids following what we do not know and reminds us of the responsibility attached to hearing, sight and the heart. This does not mean seeking an unattainable certainty in every matter. It means checking with care proportionate to the issue and its seriousness, and distinguishing what we know from what we suppose or do not know.



IN PRACTICE

Before sharing a report or judging a person, check the source, the context and the evidence supporting the claim. When the matter remains unclear, do not present it as certain. Nor should admitting that something is unverified become an excuse for spreading material that could harm others. When you discover that you have shared an error, correct it clearly for those who received it.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

*What report did I believe because it suited my inclinations,
rather than because I had checked its evidence?*

“Do not walk upon the earth with arrogance. You will neither split the earth nor reach the mountains in height.”

al-Isra' 17:37

Conceit, vanity and arrogance distort our understanding of ourselves and our relationships with others. The verse brings us back to our limits: we will not split the earth, nor grow as tall as the mountains.

We are creatures dependent upon God. Yet being dependent does not mean that our existence is unreal or that we cannot act. Whatever strength or success we have been given is both a gift and a responsibility, not a reason to consider ourselves above anyone else.



IN PRACTICE

Watch for any arrogance within yourself, and practise humility in your dealings with others, especially those with less wealth or influence. Respect the worker, the servant and the poor person, and acknowledge those who have helped you, without belittling yourself or denying what you have done well.

“The seven heavens, the earth and all within them glorify him. There is nothing that does not glorify him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification. He is ever forbearing and forgiving.”

al-Isra' 17:44

The Qur'an tells us that the heavens, the earth and all within them glorify God, and that everything glorifies him with praise. It also reminds us of the limits of our understanding: “But you do not understand their glorification” (al-Isra' 17:44).

As we contemplate this creation, our hearts open to the greatness of its Creator. We sense that, like all other beings, we depend upon him. We understand such signs as he has made accessible to us, while aspects of how creatures glorify him remain beyond our grasp.



IN PRACTICE

Set aside a few unhurried minutes to contemplate the sky, the earth or a living creature. Recognise yourself as part of this creation that depends upon God. Let your reflection lead to praise, care and good deeds, rather than remain a passing thought you soon forget.

“Tell my servants to say what is best.”

al-Isra' 17:53

God calls us to seek what is best both in the substance of our words and in the way we offer them. A sound idea does not excuse careless expression. A truthful word may wound when spoken harshly, and useful advice may be lost in a condescending tone.

Good speech is not an ornament that conceals falsehood. It is truth expressed in a way that suits the occasion and preserves the dignity of the person addressed. We bring together sound meaning and graceful expression, without making either a substitute for the other.



IN PRACTICE

Practise choosing the best words in speech and writing. Before a difficult message or conversation, review what you intend to say. Does it convey your meaning truthfully? Could you say it more kindly and clearly, without distorting the truth?

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

How can I express the same idea more clearly and kindly without compromising its meaning?

“Satan stirs discord between them. Satan is indeed a clear enemy to humankind.”

al-Isra' 17:53

Satan is a real enemy, as the Qur'an describes him. His work includes stirring discord, whispering temptation and making wrongdoing attractive. A quarrel may begin with a word to which we attach the worst possible meaning, then grow as we give way to anger until we say or do something we regret.

Dwelling on suspicion can open a door to harm. The verse therefore calls us to be attentive and seek refuge in God. Yet an unwanted, troubling thought that passes through your mind is not the same as a position you endorse or an action you intend.



IN PRACTICE

When conflict intensifies, pause before replying and seek refuge in God. Do not rush to attribute the worst intentions to the person before you. Do not dwell on what makes harming others seem attractive, and do not blame yourself for a thought you neither chose nor embraced. Seek specialist help when persistent thoughts become a source of suffering that disrupts your life.

“When We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate yourselves before Adam,’ they prostrated, except Iblis. He said, ‘Shall I prostrate before one you created from clay?’”

al-Isra' 17:61

God commanded prostration before Adam, peace be upon him, but Iblis refused in arrogance. He claimed superiority on the grounds of what he was created from: “I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay” (al-A'raf 7:12).

This scene warns us against a way of thinking that elevates one person or diminishes another on account of origin, ethnicity or affiliation. The Qur'an makes God-consciousness the measure of honour before God and calls people to know one another: “The most honoured of you in God's sight is the most mindful of him” (al-Hujurat 49:13).

Belonging to a group does not justify injustice or excuse us from acknowledging truth when it appears outside our own circle.



IN PRACTICE

Work to uproot prejudice from your judgements and conduct, whether religious, sectarian, racial or tribal. Cherish your family and the communities you belong to, without diminishing others. Apply the same standard of justice to those you agree with and those you do not.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Would I judge this action in the same way if it had been done by someone from my own group?

“Rouse with your voice whomever you can
among them; muster against them
your cavalry and infantry; share in their wealth
and children, and make them promises.
Yet Satan promises them nothing but delusion.
Over my servants you have no authority,
and your Lord is sufficient as guardian.”

al-Isra' 17:64–65

These verses portray the many avenues of temptation: the voice, the mustering of forces, involvement in wealth and children, and deceptive promises. The image invites us to examine what directs our desires and decisions, without labelling every modern tool as inherently satanic.

At the same time, the verses affirm that Satan has no authority over God's servants. Temptation is not a force that overrides a person's freedom to choose. Satan entices and makes wrongdoing attractive; the doors of refuge, remembrance and return to God remain open.



IN PRACTICE

Notice what tempts you to compromise what is right in your finances, relationships or the upbringing of your children. Ask God to help you resist, then take a practical step: cut off a source of temptation that weakens you, seek supportive company, or correct an excuse with which you have deceived yourself.

“Your Lord is the one who moves the ships for you across the sea so that you may seek his bounty. He is ever merciful towards you.”

al-Isra' 17:66

The verse recalls God's gift of making seafaring possible so that we may seek his bounty. Life is not a realm from which we must withdraw in order to worship him. Earning a livelihood, meeting needs and serving others can themselves become ways of worshipping him.

Activity in the world does not, by itself, amount to acquired nearness to God. We look instead at the knowledge, strength and perfection it develops within us, and at the direction in which we use what we gain. Do we respond to truth and seek God's pleasure, or put our gains in the service of injustice and heedlessness?



IN PRACTICE

Do what you can to overcome reluctance to act, and seek God's bounty through diligent, skilful work. Be mindful of servanthood as you learn, work, and meet your own needs and those of others. What matters is not constant activity or exhausting yourself, but doing your work well within your capacity.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What is my work developing within me, and towards what end do I use the abilities I acquire?

“We have honoured the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, provided them with good things, and favoured them greatly above many of those We created.”

al-Isra' 17:70

The verse affirms the honour bestowed on the children of Adam and their distinction above many of God's creatures. This honour calls us to respect people and safeguard the capacities and potential God has placed within us.

Humility does not require self-contempt, just as being honoured does not entitle us to look down on others. As our blessings increase, so does our responsibility to use them well and preserve the dignity of those with whom we live.



IN PRACTICE

Remember God's words, “We have honoured the children of Adam” (al-Isra' 17:70), and let them guide your treatment of yourself and others. Do not despise someone because of poverty, weakness or difference. Nor should you diminish your own dignity through injustice or by neglecting the opportunities for goodness and growth within your reach.

◆

“On the Day We summon every people with their leader.”

al-Isra' 17:71

In one transmitted interpretation of this verse, people will be summoned on the Day of Resurrection with those they followed and took as guides.⁶ This invites us to ask: to whom do we entrust our direction, and what good or evil do we learn from them?

Following someone means more than saying they are our role model. It shows in what we admire, love, choose and do. We may name one role model while our conduct reveals that we follow another standard.



IN PRACTICE

Search your heart for those who influence you and whose path you try to follow. Keep before you the example of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, in your truthfulness, compassion and trustworthiness. Do not let admiration for anyone prevent you from examining their conduct or rejecting their errors.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Whose example actually guides my decisions, as opposed to the example I claim to follow when I describe myself to others?

“Whoever is blind in this life will be blind in the Hereafter and further astray from the path.”

al-Isra' 17:72

Desire, prejudice and conceit may obscure a person's insight, weakening their ability to recognise truth, or making a wrong seem right because it suits what they want. Physical blindness is not what is meant here. The verse draws attention to blindness to guidance and the misdirection that follows.

Examining what clouds our judgement does not require suppressing our feelings or turning against ourselves. It calls us to understand our motives without allowing them to rule our judgement.



IN PRACTICE

Practise deliberation in your decisions. Listen to your feelings to understand what they are alerting you to, then weigh what they urge you to do against reason, truth and the evidence. You are not asked to become an emotionless machine. The aim is for knowledge, feelings and choices to work together, rather than be left to inclinations you have not examined.

“Keep vigil with it in part of the night as an additional prayer for you. Your Lord may raise you to a praised station.”

al-Isra' 17:79

God commands his Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, to keep the night vigil and promises him the praised station. This promise is specific to him; it should not be extended to everyone who prays at night.⁷ Night prayer offers time alone with God, with the heart attentive to his presence. These words illuminate that meaning: “The night vigil leaves a deeper impression and is more upright in speech. By day you have prolonged occupation” (al-Muzzammil 73:6-7).



IN PRACTICE

Set aside time for as much night prayer as you can sustain, however little, and pray calmly with an attentive heart. Lay your concerns before God and seek his help for the day ahead. Do not let a voluntary act become a reason to neglect your health or an obligation. Nearness lies not in exhaustion, but in sincere worship and faithfulness to what is due.

“Say, ‘My Lord, let me enter in truth and leave in truth, and grant me from your presence a supporting authority.’”

al-Isra' 17:80

This prayer invites us to be truthful in all we undertake and bring to a close: in our intentions, words, promises and actions.

Being truthful with yourself includes bringing your conduct into accord with the truth you have recognised, accepted and chosen to pursue. Your desire alone is not the measure of truth, nor is a passing setback a verdict on you. What is needed is to stop making excuses, put right what you can, and seek God's help.



IN PRACTICE

Renew your resolve each morning to be truthful and trustworthy, and choose a situation in which to practise this that day. When pressure makes this difficult, seek a wise course that safeguards both what is right and your safety, and ask for support. Do not call fear wisdom before examining what lies within your capacity.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What truth has become clear to me, and what excuse do I keep repeating so that I do not begin to act on it?

“Say, ‘Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is ever bound to vanish.’”

al-Isra’ 17:81

The verse announces the coming of truth and the passing of falsehood. It gives the believer confidence that falsehood does not become truth merely through its strength or persistence.

But this confidence does not mean that every falsehood will disappear quickly before our eyes, or that everything we call true has been established as such. Knowledge, justice and good work are indispensable. A person may misunderstand, and putting things right may require patience, cooperation and reassessment.



IN PRACTICE

Hold to the truth that has become clear to you, and seek to put things right by whatever just means are within your reach. Do not let insistence on your position prevent you from hearing an argument or correcting a mistake. Being steadfast in the truth also means having the courage to return to it.

“We send down in the Qur’an what is healing and mercy for the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.”

al-Isra’ 17:82

God describes what he reveals of the Qur’an as healing and mercy for believers. Its guidance exposes what harms our relationships with our Lord, ourselves and other people. It opens the way for us to purify ourselves, return to God and put our lives on the right course.

This is not a promise that reading and reflection alone can treat every psychological or social illness. A person may need specialist treatment, support from others, or a change in harmful circumstances. Taking such steps is part of using the means available to us, not a failure of trust in God.⁸



IN PRACTICE

Set aside time to read the Qur’an reflectively, even if only a verse or two. Ask what truth it brings to light for you, then connect your understanding with a practical step. When you are living with a disorder or persistent pain, do not be ashamed to seek treatment. Do not delay it while waiting for a feeling that indicates the strength of your faith.

“When We bestow a blessing upon the human being, he turns away and withdraws; but when harm touches him, he falls into despair.”

al-Isra' 17:83

The verse reveals our tendency to turn away when blessings come and to despair when harm touches us. It calls us not to let our relationship with God be determined by whether worldly circumstances favour us or turn against us.

Faith opens a wider horizon for life and preserves hope when our options narrow. It does not make the believer immune to sadness, fear or illness. You cannot judge a person's faith by such states alone, any more than you can judge their uprightness by outward calm alone.

Sorrow may open a door to prayer and support. A person does not have to hide their pain for their trust in God to be sincere.



IN PRACTICE

Bring both your joy and your pain to God. Thank him for what has delighted you, and tell him what weighs upon you. Then seek the help, treatment or protection you need. When you feel weak, let weakness prompt you to ask for support, not convince you that you have fallen outside his mercy.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Am I turning to God and asking for help, or blaming myself because I have not managed to appear at peace?

“Say, ‘Everyone acts according
to their disposition.’”

al-Isra’ 17:84

The verse links action to disposition: a person’s settled inner condition and the way of acting that reflects it. This helps us understand why we need to examine habitual patterns of thought, feeling and action, rather than isolated acts alone.⁹

Our repeated choices help shape this disposition, but they do not account for everything that forms it. The body, the environment and experience also have their effects. What has become established within the self is not an unalterable fate, even when changing it requires time, work and help.

As the project understands it, the self is one, with aspects related to the body, heart, intellect and spirit; these are not independent selves. Purification means greater consistency between the truth we recognise and what we accept, intend and do.



IN PRACTICE

Examine a recurring thought or a habit that influences your conduct. How did it arise? What sustains it? What can you change? Do not just insist that you should feel differently. Change a practice or a circumstance, and seek the knowledge or support that can help you do so.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What pattern keeps recurring in my responses, and what step within my reach could change what sustains it?

◆

“We have set out for people
in this Qur’an every kind of example,
yet most people persist in disbelief.”

al-Isra’ 17:89

The Qur’an explains that it has presented people with varied examples that clarify truth and invite them towards it. Yet explanation may still be met with rejection. The clarity of an argument in itself does not guarantee that everyone who hears it will accept it.

One lesson we may draw is to remain firm in the truth that has become clear to us, without taking the number of people who agree with us—whether many or few—as proof in itself that our belief is true.



IN PRACTICE

In Nahj al-Balāgha, Imam ‘Alī, peace be upon him, says: “O people, do not feel alone on the path of guidance because so few follow it.”¹⁰ Do not let the fact that few agree with you make you abandon what you have established as true, or despise those who differ from you.

Repeat an explanation with kindness and wisdom when it may help. Reconsider your understanding when an argument becomes clear, and preserve people’s right to question and choose.

“They say, ‘We will not believe you until you make a spring gush from the earth for us; or you have a garden of palms and vines and make rivers flow abundantly through it; or you make the sky fall upon us in fragments, as you have claimed; or you bring God and the angels before us; or you have a house of gold; or you ascend into the sky. Even then, we will not believe in your ascent until you bring down a book for us to read.’ Say, ‘Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a human messenger?’”

al-Isra' 17:90-93

This passage sets out demands made by those who denied the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. It closes with a reply affirming his humanity and his mission. The Messenger does not possess the unseen or wield power over the universe so as to perform every extraordinary feat demanded of him.

The verses do not deny miracles. They ground faith in evidence, rather than allowing it to become a test whose conditions a denier dictates at will. Reason examines evidence; it does not accept every extraordinary claim or personal experience as proof of truth.¹¹



IN PRACTICE

Build your convictions on evidence, bringing reason, reliable testimony, experience and revelation together in your search for knowledge. Do not surrender your judgement to a dream, a desire, a prejudice or someone claiming extraordinary spiritual powers. Nor should a gap in your understanding become a reason to believe any explanation offered to you.

“Say, ‘God is sufficient as a witness between me and you. He is fully aware of his servants and sees them all.’”

al-Isra' 17:96

The verse appeals to God's witness and knowledge of his servants in the face of rejection of the message. This supports the one who presents an argument but finds no acceptance.

We may learn from it that other people's rejection does not require us to abandon what has become clear to us as true. Nor does it exempt us from examining our understanding and how we present it. There comes a point when discussion no longer deepens understanding but simply prolongs the quarrel.



IN PRACTICE

Explain what you believe to be true with clarity and kindness, and listen to serious objections. Once you have exhausted what useful discussion can achieve, stop respectfully. Do not make your peace of mind or your continued work depend on persuading one particular person. Find a setting where explanation can help, while preserving others' freedom to choose.

“Say, ‘If you possessed the treasuries of my Lord’s mercy, you would still hold back for fear of spending.’ The human being is ever miserly.”

al-Isra’ 17:100

The verse reminds us that we could still fear poverty and losing what we have, even if we possessed the treasuries of mercy. The problem is not always how little we own. It may be an attachment that keeps us from feeling secure even as we acquire more.

In the project’s interpretation, some of the inner distress produced by turning away from God and by overpowering attachment may be a form of “the lesser punishment” that alerts a person to return. This is a proposed interpretive synthesis, not an explanation of every fear or illness. Pain alone does not establish a person’s guilt.¹²



IN PRACTICE

Examine where your heart seeks security. Do you use money to meet your needs, or ask it for a guarantee it cannot give? Draw near to God through remembrance, generosity and good deeds, while addressing the real causes of your anxiety. Do not accuse yourself or others of weak faith simply because suffering continues.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What real need am I working to meet, and where am I asking money—or something else—for an absolute guarantee it cannot provide?

“In truth We sent it down, and in truth it descended. We sent you only as a bearer of good news and a warner.”

al-Isra' 17:105

The Qur'an was revealed in truth to guide the human being, and the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, came bearing good news and warning. We should not read it merely as words whose recitation brings blessing, then leave their guidance outside our decisions and relationships.

Yet its authority as guidance does not make it a detailed manual for every science or profession. Nor does learning from a non-Muslim's expertise amount to turning away from it. The failure lies in separating God's guidance and established rulings from our purposes, values and conduct, or reading the Qur'an without allowing it to challenge our habits.



IN PRACTICE

Keep the Qur'an as your companion, reading attentively what you can and consulting a reliable commentary when the meaning is unclear. Bring its guidance together with the knowledge and expertise you need. A report on the excellence of the Qur'an says: "Whoever seeks guidance in something other than it will be led astray by God."¹³ Seek its guidance for your purposes and values, and draw on useful knowledge with discernment.

“We have divided this Qur’an so that you may recite it to people slowly, and We have sent it down in successive revelation.”

al-Isra’ 17:106

God revealed the Qur’an in portions so that the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, could recite it to people slowly. This invites us to receive its words patiently, opening the way to understanding and action rather than simply rushing through them.

Recitation has its merit, but the number of complete readings alone does not show how much guidance we have understood or embodied. Alongside our joy in reading, let us ask: what has settled in our hearts, and what has changed in our actions because of it?



IN PRACTICE

Take time to reflect, and reread a verse as often as you need in order to understand it. One insight that accompanies you to work or home may be enough for today. Do not let the hurry to reach the next page obscure the fruit of the page before you.

“Those who were given knowledge before it,
when it is recited to them, fall upon their faces
in prostration. They say, ‘Glory be to our Lord!
Our Lord’s promise is indeed fulfilled.’
They fall upon their faces, weeping,
and it increases them in humility.”

al-Isra’ 17:107–109

These verses describe people who had been given knowledge. When the Qur’an was recited to them, they recognised the truth of the promise and humbled themselves before God, expressing this through prostration and tears.

Faith here is not merely an accumulation of information. It is knowledge accepted by the heart and borne out in the direction we take and the things we do. Not everyone who knows gives their assent, and those who assent do not all express it in the same emotional way. We should not make tears or intense feeling the sole measure of faith.



IN PRACTICE

Read the Qur’an with a heart ready to understand and accept. Allow yourself to respond without forcing a feeling: with a tear, gratitude, prostration or a resolve to put something right. When no strong emotion comes, do not despair. Seek understanding and continue to put it into practice. Then consider what has changed in your conduct through what you have read.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What have I recognised and acknowledged that has not yet begun to guide my choices?

“Say, ‘Call upon God, or call upon the Most Merciful. By whichever name you call, his are the most beautiful names.’”

al-Isra’ 17:110

God invites us to call upon him by his most beautiful names, coming to know him through them and turning towards him in our needs and hopes. When provision is scarce, we call upon the Provider; when we sin, we hope for forgiveness; and when we weaken, we seek the help of the Strong, the Merciful.

Turning to God does not deny the abilities we have been given. It acknowledges their source and keeps us from making limited worldly means our ultimate refuge. We depend upon God in strength as well as in weakness.



IN PRACTICE

Alongside the supplications handed down to us, address God with the gratitude, requests or pleas for forgiveness in your heart. Reflect on the meaning of the name by which you call upon him, then take the steps your request calls for: work, learning, restoring a right or seeking help.

“Say, ‘Praise belongs to God,
who has taken no offspring, has no partner
in sovereignty, and needs no protector
out of weakness.’ Proclaim his greatness.”

al-Isra’ 17:111

The surah closes by bringing together praise, the affirmation of God’s oneness and the proclamation of his greatness. It turns the heart towards God, who has no partner and needs no protector out of weakness.

To live by God’s oneness is to make him our ultimate end and the one we worship, without giving anything else an absolute place in our hearts. This gives direction to our energies; it does not place them beyond the limits of our created nature or the patterns that govern life. Growth requires knowledge, work, time and sustaining support.



IN PRACTICE

Choose a traditional phrase of remembrance that affirms God’s oneness and whose meaning speaks to you. Repeat it at different times during the day, but do more than repeat the words. Consider what its meaning asks of you in a situation you face: a trust to fulfil, a fear not to surrender to, a blessing for which to thank God, or a task you seek his help to perform well.

A Pause for Review after Surah al-Isra'

What Has Changed in You?

Before moving on to Surah al-Kahf, return to an insight that has stayed with you. You are not asked to count what you have memorised or pass judgement on yourself. Notice what has become clearer, and where a response is now needed.

What has changed in my understanding of trust in God?

Recall a situation in which you made an effort, a means you neglected, or an outcome you tried to guarantee. Where did you take the available steps, and where did you burden yourself with what was not in your hands?

What truth have I come to understand but not yet acted on?

Choose something specific: a trust, a word, someone's right or a habit. Ask what stands between your understanding and your response, rather than simply praising the insight.

Where do I need to distinguish my responsibility from my circumstances?

Do not hold yourself responsible for someone else's actions, and do not relinquish the choices that remain open to you. What can you put right, and what help do you need?

One question may be enough for today. Return to the others when they find a place in your life.

From Understanding to Faithful Action

A Step to Take into Your Day

The fruit of reading may be a small change no one else sees: a more truthful word, a fairer response, or a return to God after heedlessness. Do not dismiss its effect, or rush to judge the whole journey.

What pattern have I discovered in my responses?

Do you rush to judgement, seek approval at the expense of truth, or treat yourself harshly when you are in pain? Name the pattern, then examine what feeds it.

What blessing would I like to give thanks for through action?

Think of knowledge, time, a relationship or an ability you have been given. Choose a way to use it well, rather than merely acknowledging that you have it.

What achievable step will I commit to?

Decide what you will do, when you will begin, and what will help you. Then set a date soon to review it—not to blame yourself, but to learn, correct and continue.

Write a line for yourself: “I have come to see ... I will begin by ... I need ...” Then seek God’s help and begin, even with a small step.



Surah al-Kahf

Live Happily

“Praise belongs to God, who has sent down the Book to his servant and placed no crookedness in it, making it upright.”

al-Kahf 18:1-2

Surah al-Kahf opens by praising God for revealing the Book and affirming that it contains no crookedness. This invites us to trust its guidance and to read in a way that allows it to question our familiar ideas and practices.

Trust in the Qur'an does not make our understanding of it infallible. We need to learn its language, attend to context, consult commentaries, and distinguish what the text signifies from what we infer from it for our lives.



IN PRACTICE

Read the Qur'an ready to learn, not merely looking for what agrees with your opinion. Bring your purposes and values before it, take care to establish the meaning of what you read, and find the courage to correct a habit or conviction when its error becomes clear.

“To warn of severe punishment from him, and to give good news to the believers who do righteous deeds that theirs will be a good reward, in which they will remain for ever.”

al-Kahf 18:2-3

This passage brings warning and good news together. It warns of punishment and promises believers who do righteous deeds a good reward in which they will remain for ever. Mercy and hope should therefore never disappear from speech that calls people towards God.

We may put so much emphasis on fear in speaking to ourselves or to those we guide that the good news is lost. Hope, in turn, may become a sense of immunity from the consequences of wrongdoing. Balance lies in hoping for God’s mercy while striving for what pleases him, and being alert to our shortcomings without despair.



IN PRACTICE

Balance fear and hope in your life and as you invite others towards God. Let fear alert you to shortcomings without driving you to despair, and let hope open the way to action without making you feel beyond accountability.

Share the good news of God’s mercy and Paradise with those around you, without neglecting to warn of the consequences of wrongdoing.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Where do I need hope to lift me, and where do I need self-examination to bring me back to putting things right?

“And to warn those who say, ‘God has taken offspring.’ Neither they nor their forefathers have any knowledge of this. Grave is the word that comes from their mouths; they speak nothing but a lie.”

al-Kahf 18:4–5

Here the Qur’an rejects the claim that God has taken offspring, showing it to be a statement made without knowledge. Being handed down from one’s forefathers does not establish its truth. This reminds us of our responsibility for what we attribute to God. It also calls us to check information before passing it on, especially where belief or people’s rights are concerned, without equating every error in transmission with the claim addressed by these verses.



IN PRACTICE

Be mindful of your responsibility for words, especially what you publish on social media. Check what is attributed to people or to religion, and distinguish your opinion from a report you are passing on. A word may reach further than its speaker intended. If you discover an error, correct it promptly.

“Perhaps you would wear yourself
to death with grief over them
if they do not believe in this message.”

al-Kahf 18:6

The verse reveals how deeply the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, grieved for those who did not believe. God’s words ease his burden, lest sorrow for them destroy him.

We learn from this that calling people to goodness begins in compassion and concern for them, not a desire to defeat them. We also learn that compassion does not require us to possess their hearts or guarantee their response, nor does it ask us to neglect ourselves.



IN PRACTICE

Continue to wish others well when you advise them or invite them towards goodness, even when they disagree with you. Offer what you can with kindness, then do not make yourself responsible for their choice. When someone harms you, let go of hatred while protecting yourself. Mercy does not mean enabling continued harm.

“We have made what is on the earth an adornment for it, to test which of them is best in deed.”

al-Kahf 18:7

God made what is on the earth an adornment and a setting for trial: who among people is best in deed? Desires and needs are not inherently evil. The test lies in how we respond to them.

The verse does not call us to stop enjoying life, but to act well within it. How do we seek what we love, by what means, and with what effects on ourselves and others? The better deed may be quieter and less conspicuous.



IN PRACTICE

Enjoy what God has made lawful and use the resources and opportunities available to you. Challenge yourself to grow in skill, truthfulness and usefulness, not just in being noticed. Let ambition move you towards growth without measuring your worth by how far ahead others are in wealth or achievement.

“Never say of anything, ‘I shall do this tomorrow,’ without adding, ‘If God wills.’ Remember your Lord when you forget, and say, ‘My Lord may guide me nearer than this to right conduct.’”

al-Kahf 18:23–24

The Qur’an asks us to recognise the limits of our plans and not speak of the future as though we owned it. We say “God willing” while making preparations and doing the work, not as an excuse to abandon resolve.

Among the sayings attributed to Imam ‘Alī, peace be upon him, in Ghurar al-Hikam is this: “The heart’s strength is rooted in trust in God.”¹⁴ Such trust sustains the heart even when the results are not what it hoped for.

The point is not only to seek God’s help in making our way through life. It is also to use life, its events and its decisions to make our way towards him—in knowledge, gratitude, patience and kindness.



IN PRACTICE

Seek God’s help as you plan, and leave room for revision. When circumstances change, adjust your means without losing your direction. When you grow heedless, return to remembrance—not because a phrase can guarantee an outcome, but to renew your awareness of your dependence upon your Lord in every condition.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

When an approach fails, does it unsettle my trust in God, or prompt me to rethink the approach without losing my direction?

“Recite what has been revealed to you of your Lord’s Book. None can change his words, and you will find no refuge besides him.”

al-Kahf 18:27

The verse commands the recitation of what was revealed to the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. It affirms that none can change God’s words and that there is no refuge besides him. Our own knowledge and understanding, by contrast, are subject to limitation, error and correction.

When a conflict appears between what we know and what we understand a Qur’anic passage to mean, we should not rush to equate our interpretation with God’s own words. We examine the accuracy of the information, the meaning and context of the text, and whether the conflict is real or arises from an incomplete understanding.



IN PRACTICE

Trust the Qur’an, and be humble in your understanding of it. Ask those with knowledge, examine the evidence, and do not let an intellectual habit or a single interpretation become a barrier to learning. Correcting our understanding does not weaken trust in the text; it keeps us from confusing the text with claims it does not make.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Am I defending a meaning that has become clear to me, or an interpretation I have grown used to and no longer examine?

“Keep yourself patiently with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking his face. Do not let your eyes turn away from them in desire for the adornment of worldly life.”

al-Kahf 18:28

The verse calls us to keep company with those who invoke their Lord and seek his face. It warns against letting worldly attractions draw us away from them. A person's worth in our eyes should not depend on their wealth or standing, nor should we marginalise those who lack social prestige.

The verse does not condemn every professional relationship or legitimate cooperation with a person of wealth. It forbids turning away from the sincere in pursuit of worldly adornment. Let us interact and cooperate without making money the measure of people's worth, selling truth or sacrificing their dignity for advantage.



IN PRACTICE

Review your relationships. Does your attention to someone grow because you hope to benefit from them, while you neglect someone from whom you expect nothing? Preserve people's dignity and keep company with those who help you towards good, without flattery or contempt.

“Do not obey one whose heart
We have made heedless of our remembrance,
who follows his desire and whose affairs
have gone beyond bounds.”

al-Kahf 18:28

The verse joins heedlessness of God’s remembrance with following desire and the loss of restraint. It warns us against following someone down that path and repeating their error.

Such influence may appear in a personal or professional relationship, or in a role model we follow. The measure is not the person’s standing or affiliation alone. It is what they call us towards, and whether their words and actions rest on truth or desire.



IN PRACTICE

Do not follow an opinion or a course of conduct simply because you admire or need the person behind it. Ask about its evidence and effects, and leave room for reassessment and courteous disagreement. Seek God’s help so that neither personal advantage nor fear of losing approval leads you to go against the truth that has become clear to you.

“Say, ‘The truth is from your Lord.
Whoever wills, let them believe;
and whoever wills, let them disbelieve.’”

al-Kahf 18:29

The Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, is commanded to proclaim that truth comes from God. The context then sets out the consequences of belief and disbelief. Mentioning choice does not make the two paths equal in value; it reminds the human being of choice and responsibility.

Calling people to faith requires explanation and counsel, not a claim that we can manufacture belief through coercion. Our task is to present the argument clearly and well; the person addressed must consider and choose. We do not fully know what clarification has reached them or what has obstructed their understanding.



IN PRACTICE

Express the truth that has become clear to you as well as you can, leaving the other person room to question and think. Do not make submission to you the purpose of advice. When they do not accept it, reconsider your explanation where needed, preserve your respect for them, and continue doing useful work.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Do I want the other person to recognise truth and choose it, or to agree with me so that I can feel I have won?

“Those who believe and do righteous deeds—We never allow the reward of anyone who does good work to be lost.”

al-Kahf 18:30

The verse brings faith and righteous action together, assuring those who do good that God does not let their reward be lost. Knowledge cannot take the place of a response, and a claim to faith is not enough if we persist in actions that contradict it.

Conversely, a shortcoming in one area should not become a sweeping judgement on a person or a reason to dismiss all the good in them. God knows intentions and circumstances, how much has been made clear to each person, and what lies within their capacity. Their final outcome is for him to judge.



IN PRACTICE

Take care to grow in knowledge and faith as well as in the good you do. Learn what you need, then give it practical expression in how you treat others, fulfil a trust or do your work well. When you see no immediate fruit, do not belittle the good you have done. Take heart that God never lets the reward of good work be lost.

“He entered his garden, wronging himself, and said, ‘I do not think this will ever perish. Nor do I think the Hour will come. And even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall surely find something better than this to return to.’”

al-Kahf 18:35–36

A blessing may tempt its possessor into assuming it will last, or thinking it proves an entitlement that can never change. The garden owner’s words reveal just such arrogance: he moves beyond what is in his hands to pronounce on the unseen and his own final outcome.

A person may imagine that their achievements arise from their own effort, independently of God’s bounty, as Qarun said: “I was given it only because of knowledge I possess” (al-Qasas 28:78). Acknowledging effort is not blameworthy. The wrong begins when that acknowledgement becomes a denial of dependence or a claim to superiority over others.

Al-Zamakhsharī describes how this arrogance may hide behind appearances: “You see this in most wealthy Muslims: even if their tongues do not utter such words, their conduct speaks them and proclaims them aloud.”¹⁵ Let us read this warning as a mirror in which to examine ourselves, not as a pretext for judging what lies in other people’s hearts.



IN PRACTICE

Seek strength and success, and place them in the service of good. As you rise in standing, grow in humility, as the Supplication for Noble Character asks: “Do not raise me by a degree among people without lowering me by as much in my own estimation.”¹⁶

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

To whom is credit due for what I have achieved, and what responsibility has this blessing added to my life?

“His companion said to him, as they conversed.”

al-Kahf 18:37

The Qur'an describes his companion as engaging him in conversation. Their disagreement did not prevent him from reminding the man of God and explaining where he had gone wrong.

From this description we may learn an ethic of dialogue: to address an idea and its consequences, rather than humiliate the person who holds it. A truthful word may keep open the door to reconsideration, while our desire to shame someone who disagrees may close it.



IN PRACTICE

Let your discussion begin in goodwill and a search for truth, not prejudice or a desire to win for your own sake. When anger begins to govern your words, pause, then return to the idea with evidence and courtesy: “Tell my servants to say what is best” (al-Isra’ 17:53).

“Have you disbelieved in the one who created you
from dust, then from a drop of sperm, then
fashioned you into a man?”

al-Kahf 18:37

The companion brings the man back to the origin of his creation: from dust, then from a drop of sperm, then God fashioned him into a man. It is a reminder that what he has been given has not made him independent of his Creator.

We are real beings, with agency and responsibility, yet we depend upon God for our existence and strength. Sincere humility means acknowledging that dependence and using God's gifts well, not denying our worth or our power to act.



IN PRACTICE

When you succeed, praise God and remember those who helped you and the opportunities you were given. Then ask how you can fulfil the responsibilities that come with the blessing. Renew this remembrance in your work as well as in your worship, so that it does not become a merely verbal acknowledgement while you act as though you needed no one.

“Why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, ‘What God wills! There is no strength except through God’?”

al-Kahf 18:39

The companion calls us to receive blessings with remembrance of God and acknowledgement that strength is not independent of him. The Giver should not disappear from the heart at the very moment we enjoy his gift.

“What God wills! There is no strength except through God” is not a formula we repeat to guarantee the continuance of what we love. It is an acknowledgement of dependence and an expression of gratitude that direct the use of a blessing towards good.



IN PRACTICE

Practise keeping the remembrance of God present in your awareness, feelings and language, whatever good or harm comes your way—whether you are enjoying life or in pain, enthusiastic or discouraged.

“If you see me as having less wealth and fewer children than you, my Lord may give me something better than your garden and send upon it a calamity from the sky, leaving it bare, slippery ground; or its water may sink away, beyond your power to recover it.”

al-Kahf 18:39–41

Having little wealth or few children should not close the door of hope, just as having much should not make us conceited. The dialogue puts what we hold in its proper place: a limited gift that can change, not a guarantee that makes us independent of God.

Unexpected causes may take away some of what we have gathered. Strength does not make us immune to loss. Nor may we treat every loss as a particular punishment; that would require knowledge of people’s circumstances and inward lives that we do not possess.



IN PRACTICE

Let your heart rely on God, and take whatever steps you can towards safeguarding what you have, learning and working. Seek people’s help when you need it without treating anyone as though they independently controlled your affairs. Hope for God’s bounty for yourself without wishing away another person’s blessing.

“His fruit was destroyed, and he began wringing his hands over what he had spent on the garden, as it lay fallen upon its trellises. He said, ‘If only I had not associated anyone with my Lord!’”

al-Kahf 18:42

The end of the story reveals how fragile the garden owner’s source of pride was, and shows his anguish when what he had invested in was lost. The pain of a loss may be compounded by regret for arrogance or a mistake that contributed to it.

Yet the mere fact of loss does not prove the corruption of the person who suffers it. Loss may befall someone who does good; its causes may be many, and we may know only some of them. Let us examine the actions within our control without claiming certainty about wisdom or unseen matters we do not know.



IN PRACTICE

When you suffer a loss, recognise your right to grieve. Then look honestly at what happened: what mistake can you put right, and what was beyond your control? Repent of a sin that has become clear to you, learn from your shortcomings, and seek help. Do not let anguish convince you that your life is over.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What part of my loss can I learn from, and what blame am I repeating without evidence?

“Set before them the example of worldly life:
it is like water We send down from the sky,
through which the plants of the earth
mingle in growth, then become
dry fragments scattered by the winds.”

al-Kahf 18:45

The Qur'an likens worldly life to water falling from the sky: the earth's plants grow and flourish through it, then become dry fragments scattered by the winds. The scene brings together the beauty of flourishing life and the speed of its passing. It reminds us not to mistake what we enjoy today for something permanent and unchanging.



IN PRACTICE

Remember the brevity of this life when its glitter tempts you or the loss of something in it weighs heavily upon you. Do this not to withdraw from building up this world or to minimise people's rights, but to place what happens within a wider horizon and use the time that remains for good that benefits you and others.

“Wealth and children are the adornment
of worldly life. But lasting righteous deeds
are better with your Lord in reward
and better as a source of hope.”

al-Kahf 18:46

Wealth and children are among the adornments of worldly life. They have real value, and carry rights and responsibilities we must not neglect. The verse directs our attention to what lasts longer: righteous deeds whose fruit does not end when worldly enjoyment passes.

A blessing retains its value and a hardship its effects, but the horizon of our lives is wider than the moment of either. Our responses of gratitude, justice, patience and efforts to put things right become part of what we send ahead for the Hereafter. God’s bounty is so vast that we cannot comprehend the fullness of his reward.



IN PRACTICE

Care well for those you love and safeguard what you have been given, while giving your life a horizon beyond what you possess. When loss comes, do not deny its pain. Seek God’s help and take whatever steps you can to address it. In blessing and hardship alike, look for the good you can offer now.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What could I do with what I have today that would bring lasting benefit?

“Will you then take him and his offspring
as protectors instead of me,
when they are your enemies?
What a wretched exchange for the wrongdoers!”

al-Kahf 18:50

The verse rejects taking Iblis and his offspring as protectors instead of God, despite his declared hostility towards the human being. It is a contradiction to recognise temptation and its source, then respond to what corrupts our lives.

This may begin with excusing a wrong we recognise, or indulging anger that draws us towards injustice. Examining this contradiction returns us to the covenant recalled by the Qur'an: to worship God and avoid Satan (Ya Sin 36:60–61), rather than find excuses for everything we desire.



IN PRACTICE

Review a wrong you committed or came close to committing. Call it what it is, without exaggeration or excuses, and ask God's forgiveness. Then close off one of the avenues that led to it or repair one of its effects. Seek refuge in God, and act on the good that has become clear to you.

“I would not take those
who lead astray as helpers.”

al-Kahf 18:51

The context denies that these beings witnessed the creation of the heavens and the earth, or even their own creation, and rejects taking those who mislead as helpers. God needs no help. Those who can neither create nor govern do not deserve to be taken as protectors in his place.

The passage can also prompt us to take care when choosing whose help to seek in our dealings. Good intentions do not compensate for a lack of competence, just as skill does not compensate for a lack of integrity. We consider both competence and trustworthiness, assessing a mistake in proportion to its seriousness. We neither dismiss a person because of a lapse nor entrust them with what they cannot do well.



IN PRACTICE

When seeking advice or assigning work, check expertise and integrity, define the task and the limits of authority, and review the result. Take guidance from the Qur’anic measure: “The best one you can hire is the strong and trustworthy” (al-Qasas 28:26). But do not give anyone absolute obedience or place their decisions beyond review.

“We have set out for people in this Qur’an every kind of example. Yet the human being is, above all things, given to dispute.”

al-Kahf 18:54

The Qur’an presents people with varied examples. Even so, our capacity to argue may become a way to protect what we want rather than understand what is true. We then look for an argument that spares us the need to reconsider, even when we recognise its weakness.

Not all disagreement, however, is stubbornness. It may arise from a legitimate question, evidence not yet clear to us, or an understanding that needs correction. Objectivity means allowing for this in ourselves as well as in others.



IN PRACTICE

Understand the idea, weigh its evidence, and follow the truth that becomes clear, not merely what suits your desires: “Give good news to my servants who listen to what is said and follow the best of it” (al-Zumar 39:17–18).

When dialogue becomes a quarrel that adds nothing to understanding, stop respectfully without claiming to know the intentions of the person who disagrees.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What argument would I accept even if it contradicted my view, and am I genuinely leaving room for it?

“We send messengers only as bearers of good news
and as warners.”

al-Kahf 18:56

The verse explains the messengers’ role in bringing good news and warning; its context also exposes the disputes of those seeking to refute truth. The call offers explanation and awakens responsibility. Its success is not measured by outward agreement extracted through coercion.

We can draw on this in advice and teaching: explain the good and the consequences of wrongdoing, and leave room for understanding and conviction. Neither humiliation nor emotional pressure should be used to extract an agreement the heart does not affirm.



IN PRACTICE

Invite others towards good and continue explaining when it helps. Avoid forcing people to accept your opinion, even by making them feel ashamed to disagree. In upbringing and education, combine compassion with fair boundaries for conduct. Rejecting coercion does not require neglecting protection or responsibility.

“Who is more unjust than one who is reminded of his Lord’s signs, then turns away from them and forgets what his hands have sent ahead? We have placed coverings over their hearts so that they do not understand it, and heaviness in their ears. Even if you call them to guidance, they will never then be guided.”

al-Kahf 18:57

The verse describes turning away from the reminder of God’s signs while forgetting what one’s own hands have done. One way to examine this in our lives is to ask: do we read what calls us towards truth, then shield our habits from its effects?

In light of the project’s understanding of the covenant of fitra, returning is not a matter of inventing a standard that suits our desires. It is a renewal of faithfulness to God and a response to the guidance that has become clear. A verse, a word of advice or a blessing may awaken us; we do not have to suffer before examining ourselves.¹⁷

Seeking knowledge or treatment from specialists is not a turning away from the Qur’an. The failure lies in rejecting a truth that has become clear, or making excuses for acting against it.



IN PRACTICE

Think of a right or duty the Qur'an reminds you to fulfil, but which you have been putting off. Seek the understanding you need, then take a truthful first step. Do not make extensive reading a substitute for response. Ask about what remains unclear instead of claiming to know it or rejecting it outright.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What reminder keeps coming back to me, only for me to push it aside because acting on it would change a habit I love?

“Your Lord is the Forgiving, full of mercy. If he took them to account for what they had earned, he would hasten their punishment.”

al-Kahf 18:58

The verse opens the door of hope in God’s forgiveness and mercy, reminding us that he does not hasten to call people to account for everything they have done. A stumble is not the end of the path, nor is respite permission to persist in it.

The self that urges wrongdoing can repent and be purified. It is not another self we must discard; it is we who reconsider the direction we have taken and seek God’s help to put it right. Return becomes visible in repentance, restoring rights and action, even when changing a habit takes time.



IN PRACTICE

Be gentle with those around you, offer advice and help them put things right. When someone errs, distinguish their mistake from their human worth. Give them a fair opportunity to make amends without neglecting the rights of those harmed. Treat yourself in the same way: do not excuse the sin, and do not close the door to return.

“Moses said to his young companion, ‘I shall not cease until I reach the meeting of the two seas, even if I must journey for a long time.’”

al-Kahf 18:60

Moses, peace be upon him, offers an example of determination in seeking knowledge. He will not stop until he reaches his destination, however long the road. Though an honoured prophet, he still seeks what will increase his sound understanding.

Do not let what you have learned become a reason to stop learning, or your position a barrier to asking questions. As you strive, remember that readiness to learn is not a fully developed ability. Ability grows through learning, practice, and the time and help available.



IN PRACTICE

Choose an area of knowledge or a skill you need, and create a programme suited to your circumstances. Ask: what can I begin with, who can help me, and how will I recognise progress? Keep the plan open to revision, and do not compare your pace with someone whose circumstances and readiness differ from yours.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What ability do I need now, and what is the first practical step towards acquiring it?

“When they reached the meeting of the two seas,
they forgot their fish, and it made its way into the
sea, slipping away.”

al-Kahf 18:61

The verse recalls the fish taking its course into the sea. The context then shows how remembering where it was lost led the two travellers back, and there they found the righteous servant (al-Kahf 18:63–65). The story takes us beyond familiar experience. It reminds us that what we see does not encompass all that happens, and that some realities may remain hidden from us.

Belief in the unseen does not mean accepting every claim about it, or failing to check what is reported to us. We believe in what is reliably established from revelation, acknowledge the limits of our knowledge, and do not fill its gaps with stories that lack evidence.



IN PRACTICE

Act on the causes you understand, and acknowledge what you do not know. Some factors affecting your life lie beyond your full understanding and control. You therefore need trust in God and prayer, together with humility in judgement and a readiness to correct your understanding.

“He said, ‘You will not be able to bear patiently with me. How could you be patient with what lies beyond your knowledge?’”

al-Kahf 18:67–68

The righteous servant connects the difficulty of patience with not fully knowing what is taking place. Our judgement of an event is shaped by what we know about it; something that would change our understanding may be hidden from us.

Knowledge is therefore important in directing a response, but it is not all that shapes conduct. A person may understand and still hesitate, or accept what is right yet need practice to act upon it well. Their response is also affected by their bodily condition, experience and circumstances.



IN PRACTICE

When you want to learn a skill or a new way of acting, first understand what it involves, then practise it in a situation you can manage. Examine what is holding you back. Is it a gap in knowledge, or a need for practice, support or a change of environment? Do not expect understanding alone to take the place of action.

“They set out until, when they boarded the boat, he made a hole in it. Moses said, ‘Have you made a hole in it to drown its people? You have done a dreadful thing!’”

al-Kahf 18:71

The end of the story reveals that damaging the boat was intended to protect it from a king who seized boats by force. What appeared to Moses, peace be upon him, as harm was shown to contain a particular wisdom (al-Kahf 18:79).

The story teaches humility before what we do not know. It does not tell us that everything which happens to a person is the best worldly outcome for them. Nor does it entitle us to identify the wisdom behind every calamity or demand that a victim be content with the injustice of their aggressor.



IN PRACTICE

Seek the best you can on the basis of what you know, and trust God’s justice and mercy in what remains hidden. When something painful happens, combine prayer with efforts to prevent harm. Do not reach for an explanation in the unseen that offers momentary comfort but then holds you back from putting things right. You may not know the particular wisdom, and still be able to do good.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Do I need to know an unseen reason for what happened, or to take a step within my reach to protect myself or improve my circumstances?

“He said, ‘Did I not tell you that you would not be able to bear patiently with me?’ Moses replied, ‘Do not take me to task for forgetting, or burden me with hardship in this matter.’”

al-Kahf 18:72–73

Moses, peace be upon him, asks not to be held to account for forgetting, and not to be burdened with hardship. The exchange reminds us of the need for gentleness, and that learning should not become a process of wearing a person down.

Under the weight of a trial, our patience may falter and we may need time and help. Pain does not mean that faith has been lost. Sincere trust does not require complete contentment at every moment. The prophets knew the pain of trial while remaining near to God. The Qur'an records the prayer of Job, peace be upon him: “Harm has touched me, and you are the most merciful of the merciful” (al-Anbiya' 21:83).



IN PRACTICE

Ease your resistance to what has already happened and cannot be undone, while continuing to address what can be changed. Seek God's help and let someone you trust support you. Do not deny yourself treatment or rest. When you make a mistake under pressure, repent and repair it rather than turning a setback into despair.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What help do I need now, and what is keeping me from asking for it?

“They went on until they met a boy,
and he killed him. Moses said, ‘Have you
killed an innocent soul who has killed no one?
You have done a terrible thing!’”

al-Kahf 18:74

Moses, peace be upon him, was shocked by the killing of the boy. He condemned what appeared to him as the killing of an innocent soul who had killed no one. He spoke according to the truth evident to him. We cannot therefore turn the story into a call to remain silent about aggression.

The story qualifies the righteous servant’s act with his statement, “I did not do it of my own accord” (al-Kahf 18:82). This is a particular circumstance no one may invoke to justify aggression by claiming a hidden wisdom or knowledge of inward realities.¹⁸



IN PRACTICE

Respond to harm you witness with reason and justice, seeking verification and appropriate protection. Do not set aside your responsibility because someone claims that a secret you cannot understand lies behind their conduct. Trust in God gives no human being the right to override people’s rights or silence questions about them.

“Moses said, ‘If I ask you about anything after this, do not keep me in your company. You have already received sufficient excuse from me.’”

al-Kahf 18:76

Here Moses, peace be upon him, sets a condition for continuing their companionship, acknowledging that the righteous servant has sufficient grounds to part from him. Learning thus calls for clear commitments and honest review, rather than stubbornness or conditions that mean nothing in practice.

We may learn from this that admitting the limits of what we can do in a particular situation does not mean we are worthless. We may need to learn more, to have more time, or to revisit an agreement we can no longer fulfil. Honesty about this is more honourable than stubbornness that only adds to our difficulty.



IN PRACTICE

Be truthful in your commitments. Do not promise what you know you cannot manage. When your capacity or circumstances change, speak openly to the person you have promised and seek an adjustment that preserves their rights. As you learn, ask for clarification and agree on clear boundaries. Humility does not require abandoning reason or burdening yourself beyond your ability.

“They went on until they came to the people
of a town and asked them for food,
but they refused them hospitality.
There they found a wall about to collapse,
and he set it upright. Moses said, ‘Had you wished,
you could have taken payment for it.’”

al-Kahf 18:77

The townspeople refused hospitality to Moses and his companion. The righteous servant then restored a wall about to fall. The story later reveals that it safeguarded what rightfully belonged to two orphaned boys who would one day reach maturity.

We may learn not to let some people’s mistreatment of us lead us to neglect the rights of others. Nor should we confine the value of an action to an immediate benefit for ourselves. A small deed today may preserve a benefit that appears only later.



IN PRACTICE

Before responding to mistreatment, ask who will be affected by your response. Preserve rights, and consider both near and distant consequences. Kindness does not mean allowing yourself to be exploited; it means not using anger as an excuse to harm someone who has done no wrong.

“As for the boat, it belonged to poor people working at sea. I intended to damage it, for beyond them was a king who seized every boat by force. As for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overwhelm them with rebellion and disbelief. So we intended that their Lord should give them in his place one better in purity and closer in affection. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphaned boys in the town. Beneath it was a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. Your Lord intended that they should reach maturity and bring out their treasure.”

al-Kahf 18:79–82

These verses reveal the wisdom behind what happened to the boat, the boy and the wall. The righteous servant told Moses, peace be upon him, what he had not known, showing that outward appearances had not revealed the whole reality.

The story calls us to humility before God’s knowledge. Yet this particular disclosure does not give us access to the hidden reality of every event. What we do not know does not excuse us from acting on what we know of truth, justice and practical means.



IN PRACTICE

Trust in God more than in your own limited understanding, without ceasing to learn and plan. Care well for your possessions and family, and pray for their good. Do not turn the possibility of loss or harm into constant fear for them. Trust in God supports care; it does not turn care into an endless expectation of the worst.



“I did not do it of my own accord.”

al-Kahf 18:82

The righteous servant states explicitly that he did not act of his own accord. The events must therefore be understood within the particular circumstances revelation discloses, not used as a pretext by someone claiming a hidden mandate that permits them to violate justice.

The story also shows care for worldly interests: preserving a livelihood and safeguarding the rights of two orphans. These events remind us that God’s care includes human life here, not only what comes after death. They do not, however, promise that every worldly wish will be fulfilled.



IN PRACTICE

Hope for God’s care as you pray and strive, without confining an answer to the one form you have imagined. Use the means of protection and repair you know. The fact that some wisdom remains hidden is no reason to set aside responsibility or believe someone who claims to know it.

“That is the explanation of what you could not bear patiently.”

al-Kahf 18:82

Once the account was revealed, Moses, peace be upon him, knew what had previously been beyond his grasp. This reminds us that our partial knowledge does not encompass God’s knowledge, and that trust in his wisdom does not depend on understanding every decree.

But asking about meaning or seeking relief from harm is not a rejection of God. We must distinguish between something occurring by God’s will and his approval of an aggressor’s conduct. Injustice may occur, yet it remains injustice that we are called to resist, not justify.



IN PRACTICE

Ask God for understanding and steadfastness, and respond to what has become clear to you of his guidance. When you do not understand what has befallen you, you may grieve, ask questions and seek relief. Let surrender mean trusting in God in a way that helps you act, not forcing yourself to approve of aggression or remain silent about it.

“They ask you about Dhu al-Qarnayn. Say, ‘I shall recite to you an account of him.’”

al-Kahf 18:83

The Qur’an opens its account of Dhu al-Qarnayn with a question about him. It then describes the power and means God gave him, and how he used them. What invites reflection here is the way strength is joined to work and responsibility, rather than mere pride in possessions.

Some reports describe him as a righteous servant rather than a prophet.¹⁹ Whatever differences researchers have over his identity and standing, the Qur’anic account of his actions invites us to reflect on how well we use the means we are given.



IN PRACTICE

Do not underestimate the good within your reach. Work to improve your surroundings, and expand your knowledge and ability as opportunities allow, seeking God’s help. Do not wait until you become someone of great standing before you begin. Your responsibility today may be limited, but it is real.

“We established him in the land and gave him a means to everything. Then he followed a way.”

al-Kahf 18:84–85

The verses describe the power and means God gave him, then tell us that he followed a way. He did not merely possess what he had been given; he put it to use. Possessing the means is no substitute for using them well.

Read alongside the story of Moses and the righteous servant, this account shows how we can combine faith in what is hidden from us with sound action based on what we can see. Together, these give direction to our striving. This does not mean that every activity in life counts as acquired worship or praise-worthy growth. We must consider an action’s effects, its purpose and how just it is.



IN PRACTICE

Combine trust in God with practical action. Learn what your work requires, plan, work well and cooperate, placing your abilities in the service of truth. When one means fails, seek another within your capacity. Do not make the unseen an excuse to neglect means, or means a veil between you and God.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

What available means have I still not pursued, despite all my talk about the goal?

“When he reached the place of sunrise, he found it rising upon a people for whom We had made no shelter from it.”

al-Kahf 18:90

The story follows Dhu al-Qarnayn as he reaches peoples living in different circumstances. It then describes his cooperation with people who needed protection from corruption (al-Kahf 18:93–97). Strength need not serve only those who possess it or those like them.

We may draw from this a wider sense of human responsibility: to help those we can, and not let differences of language, origin or country prevent us from recognising people’s needs and dignity.



IN PRACTICE

Begin with whatever service you can offer around you, and widen your circle of concern without taking responsibility for the whole world upon yourself alone. Cooperate with others towards a clearly identified good. Respect people’s experience and needs, and do not let love of your own community obscure the humanity of others.

“On that Day We shall leave them surging into one another. The Trumpet will be blown, and We shall gather them all together.”

al-Kahf 18:99

The verse recalls the gathering when the Trumpet is blown, setting daily life against the horizon of encounter and accountability. What we do is not cut off from its consequences, and the life we live now is not the final chapter of our existence.

Remembering this horizon awakens responsibility and hope; it is not a call to live in constant terror. In guiding ourselves and raising our children, we need to explain consequences with compassion, rather than paint a future of nothing but hunger and misery if they stumble.



IN PRACTICE

Remember the encounter with God in a way that helps you fulfil today's responsibilities. When guiding a child or student, explain the effects of their actions and open paths to learning and correction. Help them feel that their worth extends beyond an academic result or a temporary setback.

“Those whose eyes were veiled from my remembrance, and who could not bear to hear.”

al-Kahf 18:101

The verse describes those whose eyes were veiled from the remembrance of God, so that they did not benefit from his signs. This describes a turning away from guidance, not a moral judgement on people with a physical loss of sight or hearing.

We may also reflect on how the things we repeatedly attend to, and those we grow accustomed to, shape the way we see. We may become so absorbed in pursuing an advantage or in a quarrel that we overlook the truth, goodness and beauty around us. Recognising this influence helps us reconsider what we feed our awareness, while also caring for our bodies and the circumstances in which we live.



IN PRACTICE

Examine the words and images you take in and repeat. Reduce what feeds hatred and contempt; make room for reliable knowledge, reflection, compassion and useful action. Do not suppress natural sadness or fear in the name of positivity. Understand it, address its causes, and seek help when you need it.

“Say, ‘Shall We tell you who are the greatest losers in their deeds? Those whose striving in worldly life has gone astray while they think they are doing good work.’”

al-Kahf 18:103–104

The verses warn of people whose striving goes astray while they imagine they are acting well. The verses that follow connect this with disbelief in God’s signs and the encounter with him. Feeling certain of one’s opinion is therefore not enough to make it right.

This opens a way to examine our tendency to justify ourselves: renaming a wrong so that it fits the image we want to maintain. Yet a conscientious seeker who errs while the truth remains unclear is not the same as someone who deliberately rejects it. God knows what has reached each person and what they were able to understand and do.



IN PRACTICE

When a bad habit overcomes you, do not rename it a virtue to escape the pain of admitting it. Ask forgiveness, seek help and repair what you can, even if setbacks recur. The difficulty of returning may remain after sincere repentance. Continuing pain does not prove continuing rejection, just as the disappearance of pain does not prove that you have made the necessary repair.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Am I examining my conduct in the light of truth, or changing how I describe truth to protect my image of myself?

“Those are the ones who disbelieve in their Lord’s signs and in the encounter with him. Their deeds have come to nothing, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight.”

al-Kahf 18:105

The context explains that the loss described is connected with disbelief in God’s signs and the encounter with him, and with deeds coming to nothing. Visible achievement alone is not the measure of value in the Hereafter. Direction, faith and intention matter in ways that cannot be reduced to wealth, influence or fame.

This gives us no knowledge of individuals’ inward lives or final outcomes, nor does it permit us to call a Muslim’s heedlessness or shortcoming doctrinal unbelief. We examine our own work, judge an action by what is evident to us, and leave knowledge of what lies in people’s hearts and final judgement to God.



IN PRACTICE

Do not belittle yourself because your work goes unseen or you have little money. Practise the truthfulness, kindness and skill within your reach, and let God’s pleasure be your purpose. Beware of becoming so occupied with judging others that you neglect to put yourself right. Your hope in God’s bounty does not require you to diminish anyone else.

◆

“Those who believe and do righteous deeds
will have the gardens of Paradise
as a welcoming abode.”

al-Kahf 18:107

The Qur'an connects faith with righteous deeds and gives those who embody both the good news of Paradise. Righteous deeds include religious observances, but also fulfilling rights, serving people, seeking useful knowledge, doing work well and cultivating a just life. A believer does not confine them to a single part of life.

An action may look small to others yet be useful and sincere. Another may appear great, only to be spoiled by its means or intention. Enthusiasm for achievement is not enough; we must examine what we accomplish, how and why.



IN PRACTICE

Engage with life through ambition, planning and action. Let your pursuit of what is lawful and your service to others spring from faith in God. Remember that worshipping him can give direction to your entire life: “Say, ‘My prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying belong to God, Lord of all worlds’” (al-An‘am 6:162).

◆

“They will remain there for ever, desiring no departure from it.”

al-Kahf 18:108

When we imagine eternity in Paradise, we may project onto it the boredom we feel with repetition in this world. We ask how the self could avoid tiring of a life that never ends. But this question imposes the limits of our experience on a bliss whose inhabitants, God tells us, desire no departure from it.

The Qur'an describes real sensory delight. We should neither reduce it to symbolism nor diminish its worth. It also speaks of divine pleasure and of what lies beyond our knowledge: “God’s pleasure is greater” (al-Tawbah 9:72), and “No soul knows what delight has been kept hidden for them” (al-Sajdah 32:17).

A sacred hadith states: “I have prepared for my righteous servants what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived.”²⁰ What we can imagine now is not the measure of what God has prepared. Eternity does not require that delight become monotonous or its meaning run out.

God’s words, “They will have whatever they wish there, and with Us there is still more” (Qaf 50:35), open the door to hope in what we cannot encompass. We rest in his promise of more, without confining his bounty to an image of our own making. The forms that bliss takes and the ways it is experienced exceed anything we know in our limited lives.

This world is not an illusion without reality. It is a life in which we act, love, suffer and become. But the Hereafter is fuller and more enduring: “The abode of the Hereafter is indeed the true life” (al-‘Ankabut 29:64). The good we acquire here is not a futile thing destined to disappear. We offer it for the encounter with God, hoping for his bounty without claiming to encompass the details of the unseen.



IN PRACTICE

Let Paradise and God’s pleasure be the horizon of your hope, and allow that hope to bear fruit in your life today: in worship, love, justice and useful work. Do not diminish the bliss of the Hereafter because imagination cannot encompass it, or neglect the worldly life in which you work towards it.

“Say, ‘If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would run dry before my Lord’s words were exhausted, even if We brought as much again to replenish it.’”

al-Kahf 18:109

The verse opens our eyes to the vastness of God’s words, so that we do not imagine our understanding encompasses his knowledge and wisdom. It is linked with his words: “If all the trees on earth were pens, and the sea, replenished by seven more seas, were ink, God’s words would not be exhausted” (Luqman 31:27).

The point is not to specify the number of beings or offer a scientific measurement of the size of the universe. It is to express the vastness of God’s words, which our limited means cannot exhaust. This vastness invites us to seek knowledge with humility, not deny the value of what we know.



IN PRACTICE

Learn and enquire, and recognise where your knowledge ends. Do not treat your inability to explain something as proof that it is meaningless, or close the door to questions by claiming that reason has no value. A mind that knows its limits is better able to learn than one that imagines it has encompassed everything.

“Say, ‘I am only a human being like you,
to whom it is revealed that your God is one God.

Whoever hopes to meet their Lord
should do righteous deeds and associate
no one in the worship of their Lord.’”

al-Kahf 18:110

The surah closes by bringing together fundamental truths: the humanity of the Messenger who receives revelation, God’s oneness, the hope of meeting him, righteous action and worship devoted to him alone.

After stories in which faith, trial and empowerment take different forms, the surah returns to what gives direction to each of our lives. Our purpose should not be lost in the details of the path, nor should the affirmation of God’s oneness remain a belief isolated from the choices that shape our days.



IN PRACTICE

Recall these meanings at the beginning or end of your day. Read the verse reflectively, then connect it to a situation in your own life: where does my intention need to be more sincere, and what righteous action is within my reach? Let remembrance lead to a response, rather than remain mere repetition that leaves your life untouched.

“Say, ‘I am only a human being like you, to whom revelation is given.’”

al-Kahf 18:110

The Qur'an affirms the humanity of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, alongside the distinctive gift of revelation. We love, honour and follow him without placing him beyond servanthood to God or attributing to him any quality belonging to divinity.

His humanity gives meaning to following his example. It does not establish that all people have equal capacities or can attain his station and distinctive qualities. We follow him in what we have been called to, and seek perfection according to the abilities and scope we have been given.

The Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī says: “You do not veil yourself from your creatures, except when their deeds veil them from you.”²¹ Rather than becoming absorbed in comparing spiritual stations, let us examine the heedlessness or injustice that veils our hearts, and open a more truthful way to God through righteous action.



IN PRACTICE

Respect yourself by refining your character and developing your abilities, and respect people for their humanity. Choose a quality of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, to embody in a situation close at hand: truthfulness, compassion or trustworthiness. Following his example means taking action within your reach, not demanding that you equal the station of prophethood.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Which of his qualities can I put into practice today, rather than stopping at admiration and talk of greatness?

“Your God is one God.”

al-Kahf 18:110

God’s oneness is the foundation and spirit of the Islamic worldview: to know God as Lord, make worship of him our purpose, and let this bring coherence to our direction in life.

In light of the covenant of fitra, this acknowledgement is not meant to remain passive knowledge, but to find renewed expression in faithful action. Through sincere practice, the meanings of faith enter into our becoming. This does not happen automatically, nor does it erase differences in our capacities and circumstances.



IN PRACTICE

Keep God’s oneness present in your responses, not only your words. When you wish to develop an ability, learn, practise and use the means available, placing it in the service of good. Trust in God and undertake what you can with resolve and enthusiasm, hoping he will open to you from his bounty what you cannot yet encompass.

“Whoever hopes to meet their Lord should do righteous deeds and associate no one in the worship of their Lord.”

al-Kahf 18:110

The verse connects hope in the encounter with God with righteous action and worship devoted to him alone. Hope is not a wish that takes the place of action; it is a horizon that directs action and gives it meaning.

This also offers an insight into balance in upbringing: we explain the consequences of wrongdoing while opening the door to hope, success and correction. We do not have to threaten a child with a miserable future for them to understand the value of learning.



IN PRACTICE

Discover what awakens the curiosity of those you are raising or teaching, and what interests and abilities they have. Help them connect learning with a useful future. Set clear, achievable expectations and explain the consequences of neglecting effort without humiliating them. When they stumble, explore the reason and the next step together, rather than making them doubt their worth or fear the life ahead of them.

“Whoever hopes to meet their Lord should do righteous deeds.”

al-Kahf 18:110

The words “should do righteous deeds” open a wide field of goodness. Righteous action does not require a single temperament or profession. Alongside our obligations, the ways we can benefit others vary with our abilities, opportunities and needs.

The surah has presented different figures: the youths of the cave, the believing companion, Moses and the righteous servant, and Dhu al-Qarnayn. Their righteousness does not require identical temperaments or work, nor does their difference make personal preference alone the measure of goodness.

Enthusiasm supports striving, but it does not remove the need to learn what a task requires, or exempt us from a duty we do not enjoy.



IN PRACTICE

Choose a field of goodness that brings together your interest, an ability you can develop and a real need you can help meet. Try, learn and reconsider your choice as circumstances change. Do not confine yourself to a single image of what a believer is supposed to look like.

A MOMENT OF SELF-REFLECTION

Where does what I love meet what I can learn and a need I can help meet?

◆

**“Let them do righteous deeds and associate no one
in the worship of their Lord.”**

al-Kahf 18:110

The surah closes by joining righteous action with sincerity in worship. It is not enough to count our deeds while neglecting the intentions behind them and the rights of others they involve. Nor can a good intention replace putting an action right.

A report on the merit of knowledge says: “Two units of prayer performed by a person of knowledge are better than a thousand performed by a worshipper.”²² Its meaning reminds us of the effect of knowledge on the quality of worship, without turning the number of prayer units or the title “scholar” into a mechanical measure for ranking people.

The point is not to confine faith to prayer and leave the rest of life to our desires. Attending to worldly affairs or rejoicing in an achievement is not, in itself, associating partners with God. Such activity can be part of worship when the action is sound and its direction sincere.



IN PRACTICE

Keep God’s oneness present in your intention, work and aspirations. At the end of this journey, do not ask only how much you have read. Ask what has become more truthful in your life. Begin with what has become clear and lies within your capacity. Seek God’s help and return to him whenever you stumble. The door to action has not closed with the end of the book.

A Pause for Review after Surah al-Kahf

What Has Become Clearer?

The surah has taken you through faith, trial, dialogue, empowerment and hope in the encounter with God. Return now to your own life. Where have you recognised yourself in these reflections, and what do you want to carry with you?

Has my hope widened without weakening my action?

Listen to the way you speak to yourself. Does hope move you to respond, or make you put off that response? Does fear alert you to a wrong, or obscure the possibility of returning?

How do I respond when I cannot understand the wisdom of what happens?

Do I keep asking and striving while trusting in God, or stop until I have an explanation for everything that has happened to me? What practical step should I take without further delay?

What has changed in how I speak with those who differ from me?

Recall a recent discussion. Were you seeking truth and wishing for good, or protecting your image and trying to win? How can you return to choosing the best words?

The aim is not to give others an impressive answer, but to find a truthful answer that opens a path to action.

What Will You Take into Your Life?

The Book Ends; Faithfulness Begins Anew

Life will not become free of obstacles because you have finished reading. Yet you can leave these pages with a clearer insight and a more truthful next step, returning to them whenever your circumstances change or you need a reminder.

What excuse am I now better able to recognise?

The change may not be that you have left every wrong behind, but that you no longer call it right. What repair is possible, and what right should be restored?

What field of goodness best suits my next step?

Bring together what you love, what you can learn, and a real need you can help meet. Do not compare your path with someone else's, or let enthusiasm replace duty.

How can my knowledge, intention and action become more truthful together?

Choose one commitment that keeps you true to your direction: worship, service, learning or the fulfilment of a right. Identify what will support you and how you will review its effects.

Carry from the book what awakens your life, not what makes you harsher towards yourself. Thank God for what he has opened to you, seek his help for what remains, and return to him whenever you stumble.

Source Notes and Clarifications

These notes identify the sources of quotations and the limits of some of the reflections drawn from them. Verse references are given in the main text; note numbers refer to the entries collected here. A reference establishes where a passage is found, not the soundness of its chain of transmission.

Qur'anic Passages

In the Arabic edition, Qur'anic verses and extracts were standardised against a digital text in Uthmanic script. The boundaries of the selected passages were preserved and their references checked. In that edition, the marker “” separates verses when a quotation contains more than one. The passages quoted are not always complete verses.

Source used for the digital comparison: the Uthmanic-script text file in the quran package, version 2.3, dated 7 September 2024, available through CTAN. The quoted verses and extracts were checked against this text, with attention to pause marks and the extent of each quotation; references were reviewed in context. These are details of a technical source used for comparison, not an interpretation of the text.

[Digital source details](#)

1 — The Qur'an in Nahj al-Balāgha

Nahj al-Balāgha, compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 176: extracts from the discussion of the excellence of the Qur'an, shortened with omissions marked. The context speaks of healing from disbelief, hypocrisy, error and misguidance. This quotation alone should therefore not be used as evidence that medical treatment is unnecessary.

[Online source](#)

2 — The Return of Goodness and Wrongdoing to the Doer

Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, commentary on al-Isra’ 17:7. The return of goodness and wrongdoing to the self concerns the consequences of its actions; this does not imply that those actions bring no benefit or harm to others.

[Online source](#)

3 — Haste and Praying for Harm

Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, commentary on al-Isra’ 17:11. He mentions a person praying for harm to themselves, their children or their possessions in a moment of anger, as hastily as they pray for good. Extending this meaning to the need for care in seeking things whose outcomes we do not know is a reflective application, not a claim that this is the verse’s only meaning.

[Online source](#)

4 — Luxury and Transgression in the Verse’s Context

Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, commentary on al-Isra’ 17:16. He presents interpretations of “We command those living in luxury within it,” including that they were commanded to obey but instead transgressed. The ethical application in the main text concerns the misuse of blessings and power, not a judgement that every wealthy person is corrupt.

[Online source](#)

5 — Striving Gratefully Received

Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, commentary on al-Isra’ 17:19. He explains God’s appreciation of those who strive as generous recompense for righteous action and the overlooking of misdeeds through his mercy. The main text’s expression of expansive hope draws inspiration from this meaning; it is not a verbatim quotation from the commentator.

[Online source](#)

6 — Being Summoned with One's Leader

Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, commentary on al-Isra' 17:71. He records several interpretations of “with their leader,” including those whom people followed and, alternatively, the record of deeds. The first was chosen for this reflection on following an example, without claiming that it is the verse's only interpretation.

[Online source](#)

7 — The Night Vigil and the Praised Station

Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, commentary on al-Isra' 17:79. The address is to the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, and the promise of the praised station pertains to him. The recommendation to seek solitude for worship and attentiveness of heart does not extend that station to the reader. The reflection also draws support from al-Muzzammil 73:6–7.

[Online source](#)

8 — Healing, Guidance and Treatment

See the context of al-Isra' 17:82 and the reference to *Nahj al-Balāgha* in Note 1. For the distinction between guidance and specialist treatment, see the World Health Organization fact sheet “Depressive disorder (depression),” 29 August 2025. It describes interacting social, psychological and biological factors and sets out treatment possibilities. This book does not seek to diagnose an individual condition or replace specialist care with contemplation.

[Online source](#)

9 — Disposition and the Unity of the Self

Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, commentary on al-Isra’ 17:84. He records meanings of disposition that include way, intention and direction. Reading the body, heart, intellect and spirit as aspects of one self, and relating purification to their truthful accord, belong to the project’s interpretive framework. See *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview*, particularly the entries on the unity of the self and inner truthfulness in its reference glossary, and the discussions of the self in *The Immortal Self*. This technical formulation is not attributed to the words of the verse or to al-Ṭabarī.

[Online source](#)

10 — Do Not Feel Alone on the Path of Guidance

Nahj al-Balāgha, compiled by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Sermon 201 in the numbering of the linked electronic edition: “O people, do not feel alone on the path of guidance because so few follow it.” Sermon numbering may differ between editions, so the passage can also be identified by its opening words.

[Online source](#)

11 — The Limits of Inference from Demands for Extraordinary Signs

Al-Isra’ 17:90–93. Read the passage with its context, which sets out the proposed demands and the Messenger’s response. It should not be taken as denying miracles in principle, or as confining knowledge to reason while neglecting reliable testimony, experience and revelation.

12 — The Lesser Punishment and the Limits of Reflective Inference

Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, commentary on al-Isrā’ 17:100, explains “fear of spending” as fear of poverty and need. Reading some of the inner distress arising from turning away and attachment as a form of the lesser punishment is a proposed interpretive synthesis within the project, in light of al-Sajdah 32:21, Ta Ha 20:123–127 and al-Ma‘arij 70:19–35. See “Conceptual Memorandum: The Lesser Punishment, Anxious Grasping and Distress,” reviewed version 3.1, and the updated reference volumes. This does not mean that every pain is punishment, that psychological illness proves guilt, or that the disappearance of pain is the measure of repentance.

[Online source](#)

13 — The Report on the Excellence of the Qur’an

Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī, Book of the Rewards of the Qur’an from the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, hadith 2906, reported from ‘Alī. The wording is: “Whoever seeks guidance in something other than it will be led astray by God.” Al-Tirmidhī describes the report as gharīb, notes that its chain of transmission is unknown, and mentions criticism of al-Ḥārith. This assessment of weakness concerns the route of transmission cited; no claim is made to cover every route through which the content is reported.

[Online source](#)

14 — The Root of the Heart’s Strength

Al-Āmidī, Ghurar al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim, among the sayings attributed to Imam ‘Alī, peace be upon him: “The heart’s strength is rooted in trust in God.” This is the fourth saying in the section on trust in God in the thematic arrangement of the linked electronic edition.

[Online source](#)

15 — The Quotation from al-Kashshāf

Al-Zamakhsharī, al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl, commentary on the owner of the two gardens at al-Kahf 18:35–36. The quotation concerns what people’s conduct says about them. It is an exhortative observation within the commentary, not a statistical assessment of the wealthy or grounds for claiming to know what lies within their hearts.

[Online source](#)

16 — The Supplication for Noble Character

Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya, Supplication 20, “On Noble Character and Pleasing Actions,” the passage: “Do not raise me by a degree among people without lowering me by as much in my own estimation.” The concern here is resisting arrogance, not denying the self’s worth or rights.

[Online source](#)

17 — The Covenant of Fitra and Inner Truthfulness

See *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* and its reference glossary, *The Immortal Self*, and the reviewed memorandum “The Covenant of Fitra, Uprightness and the Path of Inner Truthfulness.” In the project, fitra does not mean every personal inclination. Inner truthfulness is the truthful accord among the aspects of the one self under truth and fitra, not following feelings without examination. Self-examination, repentance and repair are means of deepening it.

18 — The Particular Nature of the Righteous Servant's Actions

The Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:74 and 18:82; and Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm, on al-Kahf 18:82, especially the explanation of "I did not do it of my own accord" and the discussion of the view that he was a prophet. The distinction between this particular account and ordinary human actions must be preserved. It must not be used to justify aggression or the violation of rights on the basis of a claim to hidden knowledge.

[Online source](#)

19 — The Report about Dhu al-Qarnayn

Al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-dīn wa-tamām al-ni'ma, edited and annotated by 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, Qom, 1405 AH, chapter "Reports Concerning Dhu al-Qarnayn," report 3, pp. 393–394 in the printed pagination. The report denies that he was a prophet and describes him as a servant who loved God and was loved by God. Its presence is recorded here without resolving differences over his identity and standing or independently authenticating its chain of transmission. This description is not applied to the righteous servant in the story of Moses; that is a separate question.

[Online source](#)

20 — What God Has Prepared for His Righteous Servants

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of the Beginning of Creation, hadith 3244; and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book of Paradise, Its Delights and Its People, hadith 2824, reported from Abū Hurayra. The verses on bliss quoted alongside the hadith are identified in the main text. The general promise of "more" does not, by itself, establish any particular claim about how delight is renewed or the detailed conditions of the people of Paradise.

[Online source](#)

[Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim — online source](#)

21 — The Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī

The Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, transmitted from Imam ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, at the passage: “You do not veil yourself from your creatures, except when their deeds veil them from you.” The location of the words in the supplication is identified here. Citing them does not establish that all people have equal capacities or can attain the Messenger’s station and distinctive qualities.

[Online source](#)

22 — Knowledge and Its Effect on Worship

Ibn Idrīs al-Ḥillī, *Mustaṭrafāt al-sarā’ir*, within the counsel attributed to the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, addressed to ‘Alī, peace be upon him, on the page marked 620 within the linked electronic text: “O ‘Alī, two units of prayer performed by a person of knowledge are better than a thousand performed by a worshipper.” It is cited as supporting reflection on the effect of knowledge on worship, without an independent authentication of the counsel’s chain of transmission or a mechanical ranking of individuals.

[Online source](#)

Where to Read Next

The project does not prescribe a single reading order. Having entered through contemplation and lived practice in this book, you can turn to *The Islamic Intellectual Framework* for the worldview foundation, and to *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* for the governing definitions, laws and models. The reference volume opens with a brief reading map; its appendices include a glossary followed by the detailed Reader's Guide. Consult the glossary for precise meanings and the guide to choose a reading path. *The Immortal Self* develops the account of the human being; *No Limits* offers application and comparative critique; and *The Journey of a Toiler* embodies the ideas in narrative.

A QUICK MAP

- 1 **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — The worldview foundation and the project's fuller account of the cosmos.
- 2 **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — The governing reference text, including the Reader's Guide and reference glossary.
- 3 **The Immortal Self** — The volume that develops the model of the human being and its unfolding journey.
- 4 **No Limits** — The accessible introduction to the laws and the principal setting for comparative critique.
- 5 **Live Happily** — The path into Qur'anic contemplation and its practice in daily life.
- 6 **The Journey of a Toiler** — The project's ideas embodied in narrative.

The Reader's Guide and reference glossary are both contained within *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* itself.

A Letter from the Author



These books began with a question that has stayed with me: how can a person understand themselves, move through life and journey towards God without becoming detached from reality, work or responsibility? In each book, I have tried to approach one aspect of that question—by laying foundations, offering explanation, exploring practical applications, contemplating or telling a story.

I offer these works not as final answers, but as a human endeavour within the Islamic worldview, seeking clarity and remaining open to revision. My hope is that the idea remains the protagonist, evidence its servant, and language the path by which it reaches the reader's mind, heart and everyday actions.



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CORRECTIONS AND REVIEW

This book belongs to an intellectual project open to review and development. Substantive corrections and details of the latest print or digital edition are published in the official library at <https://abbasalhumaid.com/library/>.

Documented comments may be submitted through the website's contact form, identifying the book, edition, page, passage and nature of the comment. Scholarly and editorial contributions that improve accuracy and clarity are gratefully acknowledged.

About the Author



Abbas Al Humaid is an Omani author, researcher and strategic consultant. Questions about human existence and purpose have accompanied him from his earliest years: how does a human being come to be who they are? How do knowledge, faith and action become a conscious movement towards God? How can depth of meaning be joined with precision in action? These connected questions have shaped his path in reading, writing and professional life.

In 2023, he was honoured by the confidence of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik—may God protect and preserve him—when a Royal Decree appointed him to the State Council of the Sultanate of Oman for the 2023–2027 term. This distinguished national appointment marks an important stage in his career. Through the Council’s work, particularly its Economic and Financial Committee, he contributes to the study of public issues and policies, and offers strategic perspectives in support of national development and more effective economic and institutional performance.

He studied religious sciences and philosophy in traditional circles of learning, then followed a professional career spanning nearly three decades in accounting, auditing, consulting, strategy, management and institutional transformation. He has spent more than two decades in partnership and leadership positions within international professional firms, leading strategy, transformation, restructuring and governance projects in Oman and beyond.

Alongside his national role, he leads Merit Group and Merit Academy from Oman. Through these professional and educational platforms, he shares the substance of his experience with leaders, individuals and institutions, helping develop strategic, managerial and professional capabilities. He holds several international professional credentials in accounting, consulting and management, including CPA, CFE, CMC and CMgr.

His professional experience has never been separate from his intellectual concerns. He came to see that spirituality and strategy, however far apart they may appear, meet in a single question: how does purpose become a path, vision become action, and a human being move from one condition to another? His writing seeks to connect contemplation with work, ideas with their effects, and vision with human movement through life. He founded the Islamic Theory of Origination Project as an interpretive intellectual undertaking within the Islamic worldview, exploring human becoming, existential movement, growth, conduct and a sense of mission. It connects intellectual foundations with human experience and practical application. His works span the Islamic worldview, the human being and growth, Qur'anic contemplation, literary narrative, management and strategy.

Abbas Al Humaid writes as an enquiring researcher, distinguishing sacred text from human understanding, and religious foundations from interpretive constructions open to examination and revision. His writing rests on clarity of thought, accurate attribution, respect for the reader's intellect, and openness to criticism and correction.

He makes the e-books displayed in his digital library freely available, hoping to broaden access to knowledge and the conversation around it. He asks not for immediate agreement, but for an honest reading, a testing of ideas and whatever corrections the reader finds necessary. The idea is the protagonist, evidence its servant, and language the path.

Books in the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

THE SIX BOOKS

- ① **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — The worldview foundation and the project's fuller account of the cosmos.
- ② **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — The governing reference text, including the Reader's Guide and reference glossary.
- ③ **The Immortal Self** — The volume that develops the model of the human being and its unfolding journey.
- ④ **No Limits** — The accessible introduction to the laws and the principal setting for comparative critique.
- ⑤ **Live Happily** — The path into Qur'anic contemplation and its practice in daily life.
- ⑥ **The Journey of a Toiler** — The project's ideas embodied in narrative.

THE READER'S GUIDE AND REFERENCE GLOSSARY

Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview includes the project's Reader's Guide and reference glossary. The former presents the map and reading paths; the latter defines the terms and their cross-references. Both are parts of the reference volume itself, not a separate volume or a seventh book.

Online library: <https://abbasalhumaid.com/library/>

From the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

Live *Happily* brings Qur'anic contemplation into everyday life. It connects selected verses from Surahs al-Isra' and al-Kahf with the questions we face and the ways we live, turning each reflection into a practical recommendation that can be revisited through self-examination.
