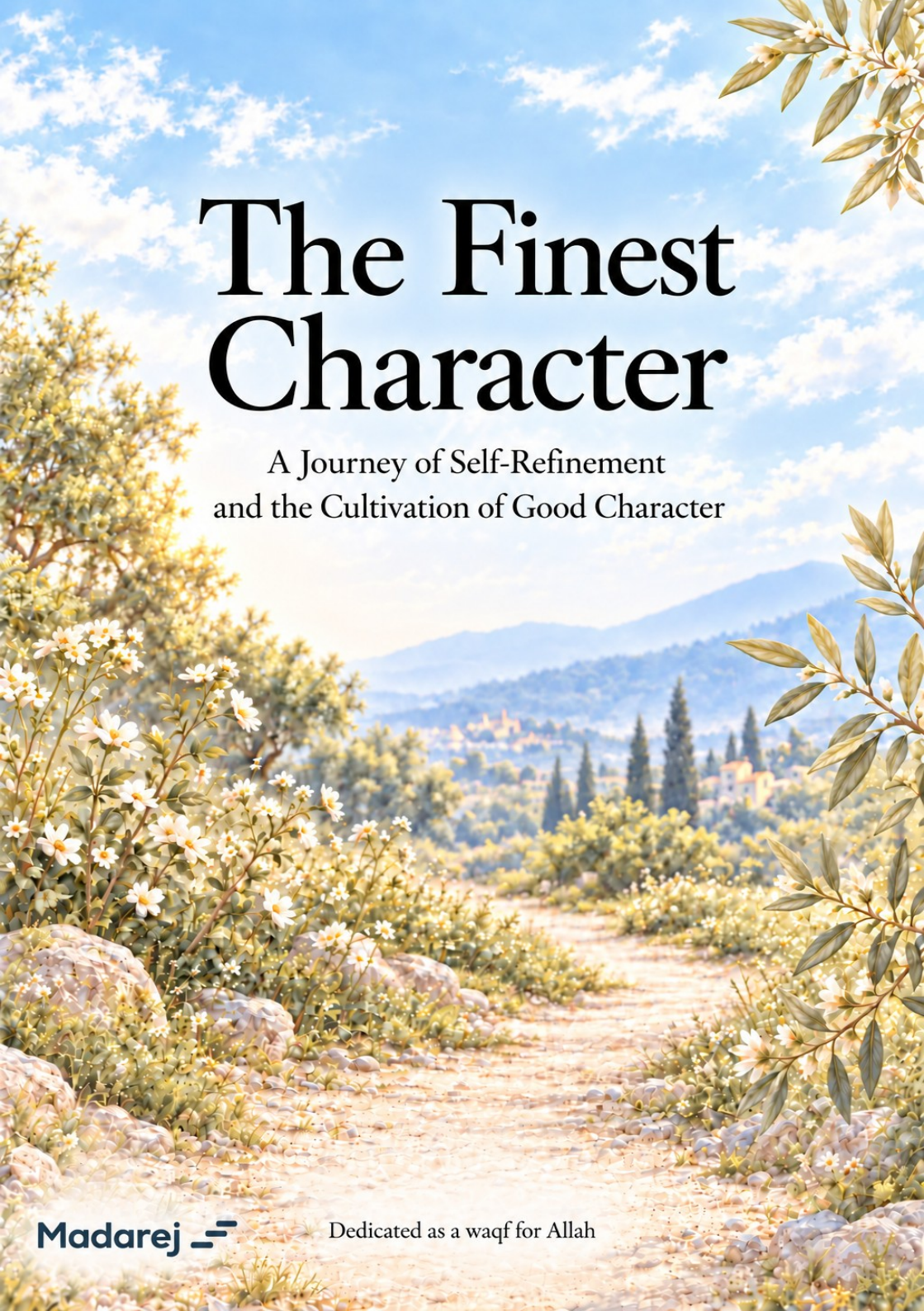




The Finest Character

A Journey of Self-Refinement
and the Cultivation of Good Character

The Finest Character

*A Journey of Self-Refinement and the Cultivation of Good
Character*

The expanded edition in eleven books

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Dedicated as a waqf for Allah

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Dedication

For you who have regretted a word that wounded someone you love; who wished you had been gentler, and resolved to meet the next difficult moment with greater patience and mercy.

For you who are struggling to be truthful, learning to forgive, or trying to protect your rights without wronging someone else. We offer these pages with affection, hoping that they will help you take an honest step towards a better way of living.

You and we alike need Allah's help. We ask Him to forgive our shortcomings and to refine our words and deeds. When you ask Him for good character, please remember us in your supplication, together with our parents and everyone who helped this book reach you.

O Allah, guide us to the finest character. Help us treat those around us gently, restore people's rights, and return to You whenever we go wrong.

A shared endeavour, for which we ask Allah for sincerity and acceptance.

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy.

All praise belongs to Allah, who guided us to faith, taught us what benefits us, and commanded justice and excellence. We praise Him for His gifts, seek His forgiveness for our shortcomings, and ask Him for sound hearts, truthful tongues, and deeds that please Him. May His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and all his Companions.

O Allah, mend what has gone wrong in our character. Help us overcome the faults we have come to recognise. Forgive the words with which we have hurt others, our harshness towards those who needed mercy, and the rights we have delayed returning. Give us the courage to admit our mistakes, the sincerity to repent, and the patience to repair the harm. Let our pursuit of good character be a pursuit of Your pleasure. Help us do good in private as well as in public.

Perhaps the day ends and a sentence you spoke in anger keeps returning to you. You could have spoken gently. You could have waited until you were calm. Instead you hurried, and saw what your words did to the face before you. You may have apologised, yet an honest question remains: Why does anger outrun me when I know patience is better? Why do I want to be merciful, yet become harsh with the people closest to me?

That question deserves our attention. We live our character at home when we are tired, at work when we disagree, with people who wrong us, and with those who cannot answer us back. The gatherings for which we carefully prepare reveal only part of the story. Ordinary moments show us what still needs care. They also give us real opportunities to learn, return, and do better.

We are not alone in this need. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) taught us to seek Allah's guidance to the finest character. Among his supplications when beginning the prayer were these words:

Guide me to the finest character; none guides to its finest except You. Turn its evil away from me; none turns its evil away from me except You.

Source: Sahih Muslim, hadith 771, narrated by Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him). English rendering of the cited passage.

This supplication acknowledges how deeply we need Allah in the work of reforming ourselves. We may recognise a fault and still struggle against a familiar habit. We need knowledge to show the way, resolve to act upon it, and Allah's help to remain steady. In asking for the finest character, we seek a goodness that will become visible in our conduct, rather than a flattering description of ourselves.

The prayer brings together the pursuit of virtue and deliverance from vice. Someone who wants to guard the tongue must learn both to stop causing harm and to speak well. Someone who wants to be just must refrain from oppression and fulfil people's rights. Reform takes a practical shape: a harmful habit relinquished, a good action practised, a recurring situation we hope to handle more wisely next time.

Good character has great worth even when its actions are quiet and attract little attention. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, in meaning:

Nothing is heavier in the believer's balance on the Day of Resurrection than good character. Allah hates the foul-mouthed, obscene person.

Source: Jami al-Tirmidhi, hadith 2002, narrated by Abu al-Darda (may Allah be pleased with him). Al-Tirmidhi graded it hasan sahih.

The hadith draws our attention back to things we may dismiss: restraining ourselves in a quarrel, bearing an occasional lapse, or responding gently to someone who cannot explain a need well. Obscenity is no proof of strength. Making a gathering laugh does not make it acceptable to humiliate another person. We may remember many sayings about virtue while still needing to guard our own tongues when doing so is hardest.

The Prophet's everyday conduct helps bring good character within our understanding. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he served him for ten years. The Prophet never addressed him with an expression of irritation, nor reproached him by

asking why he had done something or why he had failed to do something else.

Source: Sahih Muslim, hadith 2309, narrated by Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him).

Ten years of close companionship reveal what a brief encounter cannot. We can reflect here on the meeting of education and mercy, and on guidance that does not depend upon humiliation or relentless blame.

This does not mean abandoning instruction or leaving mistakes uncorrected. It asks something more searching of us: How do we teach those in our care? Does mercy accompany our guidance, or do we make another person carry the weight of our exhaustion?

One of us may say: I know all this, but I am quick-tempered; I cling fiercely to my rights; sharp answers have become second nature. Recognising a temperament is useful when it shows us where effort is needed. It becomes harmful when we turn it into a permanent excuse. Familiar habits need not remain forever. An unsuccessful first attempt tells us little about what we may learn through continued effort.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, in meaning:

Whoever strives to be patient, Allah will grant him patience. No one has been given a gift better or more abundant than patience.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 1469, narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him); an excerpt from a longer report.

Here we are directed to make an effort and hope for help. Learning patience involves asking something of ourselves before patience becomes easy. We might postpone an angry reply, listen to the end before objecting, or stop reviving an old insult in every new disagreement. These are possible beginnings, not a promise that weakness will quickly disappear or that we will never stumble again.

Supplication accompanies the effort. Before a difficult encounter, we ask Allah for guidance. When obedience feels heavy, we seek His help. When we fail, we ask forgiveness; when He helps us do good, we give thanks. We need not wait until every virtue becomes effortless before practising it. Much good requires patient repetition. Gradual learning does not

justify continued harm or postponement of repentance.

Nor can other people's approval be our only measure. Someone may become angry because we refuse to help with an injustice. Another may resent being asked to honour a right. We can stand by what is right and still speak respectfully. We can refuse a request without despising the person making it. Gentleness does not mean abandoning the vulnerable, and forgiveness does not mean compelling a wronged person to surrender a claim. We need discernment: when to be gentle, when to be firm, and how to prevent self-defence from becoming aggression.

When we wrong someone, grief over our damaged image is insufficient. We must consider the injury they suffered and repair what we can. A sincere apology does not make our wrongdoing their fault, or demand that their pain vanish as soon as we say sorry. Trust may need time and consistently better treatment. Such self-examination serves repentance and repair; it should not become despair or endless self-punishment.

Allah says: ﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا﴾ — meaning: Successful indeed is the one who purifies it. [Al-Shams 91:9]

Purifying the soul remains our work for as long as we live. It is no certificate we award ourselves after one good deed or the abandonment of one bad habit. Allah may open one door of goodness while others still need attention. If generosity comes easily, examine your speech. If you are truthful, examine your gentleness. If you are patient, examine your justice. We do this to thank Allah for the good He has enabled, and to avoid using it to conceal what we have left unreformed.

Throughout this journey we shall return to the small situations that recur in our days. How do we receive an excuse? How do we disagree without inventing accusations? What do we do when kindness goes unthanked? Then comes the personal question: Which quality needs my attention today? The step within reach may be an overdue apology, a right restored, or a harmful way of speaking abandoned. Our hope for a good ending should be accompanied by care for the action that lies before us now.

O Allah, help us against our own failings. Make our knowledge beneficial and our conduct gentler towards Your servants. Grant us truthfulness that preserves trust, justice that anger cannot corrupt, and mercy that becomes visible in our dealings. Forgive the faults we have not recognised, and those we recognised but struggled to mend. Guide us to sincere repentance and righteous deeds.

Among our Prophet's supplications was this prayer, rendered in meaning:

O Allah, grant my soul its piety, and purify it; You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and Master.

Source: Sahih Muslim, hadith 2722, narrated by Zayd ibn Arqam (may Allah be pleased with him); an excerpt from a longer report.

Book One — Character and Its Place in Faith

Chapter 1 — The Face Within

A mirror shows us our outward appearance quickly. The inward self is less easily seen. It becomes visible in a word spoken in anger, in our treatment of someone from whom we expect nothing, or in what we do when we have the power to retaliate. This is the territory of character. Arabic distinguishes between *khalq*, the outward form, and *khuluq*, the settled inward disposition from which actions arise. A settled disposition is not an unchangeable destiny. An action repeated until it becomes easier draws closer to a habit of the soul.

Al-Ghazali clarifies this distinction in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*. He describes character as a settled condition of the soul from which actions proceed readily, and distinguishes it from the action itself, the ability to act, and knowledge about the action. Knowing that generosity is good does not make a person generous.

Possessing wealth does not make its owner willing to give. Even a single generous act may arise from a passing circumstance. We must consider the pattern of conduct and what moves a person to act. [Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, Book of Training the Soul, Refining Character and Treating Diseases of the Heart, discussion of the reality of good and bad character.]

This protects us from two mistakes: assuming that knowing a virtue is the same as possessing it, and despairing because practising it is still difficult. Early effort does not prove an insincere intention. Holding back a hurtful word for Allah's sake can be an honourable struggle. What distinguishes training from putting on a performance is its purpose. Am I learning to fulfil my duties to Allah and His servants, or manufacturing an image contradicted by my private behaviour? We need not exhaust ourselves interrogating every passing thought. We should correct our intention and keep working.

A passing good deed cannot establish our whole character. We may give once while remaining habitually reluctant, or restrain anger in company and

release it at home. Character appears in the prevailing direction of a life, without implying freedom from mistakes. A patient person may become angry, a generous person may feel constrained, and a truthful person may misspeak. Sincerity shows itself in returning promptly to what is right, instead of turning a lapse into a position we defend.

Although character has an inward root, its reform cannot remain inward. Mercy that never reaches the vulnerable is incomplete. Justice that disappears in a quarrel has not grown strong. Allah says: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ** — meaning: Allah commands justice, excellence and giving to relatives, and forbids indecency, wrongdoing and transgression. [Al-Nahl 16:90] These commands gather foundations of sound dealings; the prohibitions gather ways of corrupting ourselves and harming others.

Each difficult act of truthfulness, each silence chosen for fear of injustice, helps shape the person within. Repeated actions teach the heart, while a sound heart nourishes action. Character develops through this

exchange: an intention corrected, an action practised, a mistake repented of, a right returned.

Recall a recurring moment from your week: a family conversation, a disagreement at work, a comment you wrote. Describe it honestly, without excuses or cruelty towards yourself. What inward habit did it reveal? What better response could you practise until it grows stronger?

Chapter 2 — Temperament Can Be Trained

People differ in temperament. Calm comes readily to some; others are quickly provoked. Some give easily, while others struggle to release what is in their hands. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told al-Ashajj of Abd al-Qays that he possessed two qualities Allah loves: forbearance and deliberateness. [Sahih Muslim, 17] Whoever finds these qualities easy should give thanks. Whoever needs them has reason to strive.

Temperament does not cancel responsibility. A calm person should be grateful, while guarding against

indifference when justice needs defending. A quick-tempered person must not turn temperament into permission to hurt people. It identifies where treatment must begin. Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity; nevertheless, what we happen to be accustomed to is not the standard of right and wrong.

Al-Ghazali answers the claim that temperament closes the door to reform. Refining anger and desire does not mean eradicating them, but bringing them under proper direction. Anger may help repel injustice; the task is to prevent it from producing another injustice. Wanting wealth may encourage lawful earning; it must be restrained from betrayal and miserliness. People differ in readiness and in the strength of their habits, so change will not demand equal effort or proceed at equal speed for everyone. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of the possibility of changing character through training.]

We should therefore look for observable progress. Someone who interrupts can begin by listening to the end. Someone whose replies wound can learn a clear sentence without an insult. These are applications

offered here, not prescriptions quoted from al-Ghazali or religious scales by which to judge people. Discomfort may remain even when conduct improves. We should neither delay fulfilling a right until we enjoy doing so, nor declare our effort unsuccessful because effort is still necessary.

Habit connects temperament with acquired character. Delaying an angry reply, leaving a dispute until calm returns, and refusing to send messages while agitated can change the route a reaction takes. The Prophet taught, in meaning, that whoever strives to be patient will be granted patience by Allah, and that no gift is better or more abundant than patience. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1469; Sahih Muslim, 1053] We undertake the means sincerely and seek Allah's help.

Training is not pretence. Pretence displays a goodness we do not intend to live by. Training practises what Allah loves before it becomes familiar. A sincere apology may be hard to make; making it returns us to the truth. Giving while resisting miserliness treats a fault we want to escape.

Progress is not always steady. After better days, pressure may revive an old reaction. Repent, repair the injury, examine what opened the door, and resume the work. Over time, returning may become quicker, harm less severe, and formerly difficult goodness easier, by Allah's permission.

Name one quality that comes easily and thank Allah without declaring yourself pure. Then identify a difficult quality and one visible action. Instead of merely resolving to be patient, resolve to let the other person finish speaking when a discussion becomes heated.

Chapter 3 — From Intention to Disposition

Intention begins the journey, but does not complete it. We may sincerely want mercy, then let haste govern our response. We may seek justice while also craving victory. Intention needs knowledge to expose mistakes, action to give it substance, and self-examination to prevent complacency about our good motives.

Al-Ghazali's distinction between knowing a virtue and possessing it matters here. Someone may explain patience beautifully and resent the first disagreement, or discuss generosity while avoiding repayment of a debt. The difficulty is not merely insufficient information; it is the passage from knowledge to a repeated response. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of the reality of good and bad character.] Beneficial knowledge remains essential, but calls for action that confirms it. Return to the fault you have recognised, change a particular behaviour, and examine what has improved and what remains. This attention to ourselves should benefit others, not absorb us so completely that we forget them.

Allah says: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾

— meaning: Believers, be mindful of Allah and be with the truthful. [Al-Tawbah 9:119] Truthfulness belongs to companionship and practical allegiance as well as inward feeling. The Prophet explained that truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness to Paradise; a person continues speaking truthfully and seeking truth until recorded with Allah as

thoroughly truthful. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6094; Sahih Muslim, 2607; the cited Arabic wording follows Muslim.] Deliberately seeking the truth means attending to our words instead of accepting convenient carelessness.

A disposition develops as the right response becomes more familiar. Yet it never removes our need for watchfulness. A quality strengthened in ease may be tested by a quarrel, recognition or money. We ask for steadfastness. The Prophet taught that human hearts are between two fingers of the Most Merciful, who directs them as He wills. [Sahih Muslim, 2654, Book of Divine Decree, chapter on Allah's directing hearts as He wills.] Past effort is no reason to cease seeking His help.

A sound path also makes repair part of character. A truthful person does not rewrite a mistake to protect an image. A just person restores another's right despite embarrassment. A merciful person who has been harsh apologises without demanding immediate absolution. Character appears in how we respond after a failure as well as in how rarely we fail.

Social polish is different from a settled virtue. Kindness may be easy with strangers whose admiration we want, and difficult with family who see us unprepared. We may be patient with a manager and harsh with employees. These differences reveal how much self-interest still governs our conduct. They need not lead to despair. As kindness reaches both those who can reward us and those who cannot, our actions draw closer to sincerity.

Observe one quality at home, at work, and on the road or online. Where your responses differ, ask what advantage or fear is changing your behaviour, rather than merely deciding where you looked best.

Chapter 4 — Duties to Allah, to Ourselves and to Others

Good character is often discussed as the treatment of people. This is true, but the subject begins with our position as servants of Allah: faith, submission, love, fear, hope, gratitude and patience. We need no invented language for this relationship. Revelation teaches us to worship Allah alone, believe what He

tells us, accept His judgement, think well of Him, feel shame before Him, hope for His mercy and fear His punishment.

Ibn Rajab identifies a subtle misunderstanding of piety: attending to the acts of worship we associate with Allah's rights while neglecting His servants' rights. Explaining the instruction to treat people with good character, he includes such treatment within piety itself. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, commentary on hadith 18, at the instruction to treat people with good character.] Honesty at work, truthful speech and freedom from domestic harm are part of drawing near to Allah. Conversely, good dealings do not replace faith or obligatory worship. We must bring together duties that heedlessness has separated.

With ourselves, wise care requires neither indulging every desire nor exhausting the body. We have rights to rest, lawful nourishment and safety, alongside duties of obedience and restraint. Salman told Abu al-Darda (may Allah be pleased with them) that his Lord, his own self and his family each had rights, and he should give each its due. The Prophet affirmed that

Salman had spoken truthfully. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1968]

The circle of human dealings includes parents, spouses, children, neighbours, workers, opponents, people who offend us, and those who claim something from us. Good treatment does not require an identical response to every situation. Relationships have distinct rights. Forgiveness may be fitting; justice may need to be enforced. Silence may be wise; speaking the truth may be obligatory. Revelation, rather than personal ease or universal approval, supplies the measure.

These circles are connected. Recognising our need of Allah leads us to seek His help with our weaknesses. Guarding ourselves against what is forbidden helps us approach people with less inner turmoil. Honouring their rights brings worship into daily life. When we separate these duties, we may pray at length and then attack people's reputations, or speak of mercy while mistreating our families.

Allah says: ﴿إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ﴾ —
meaning: Prayer restrains indecency and wrongdoing.

[Al-Ankabut 29:45] The Prophet instructed whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day to speak good or remain silent. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6018; Sahih Muslim, 47] Belief in judgement belongs in the choice of a sentence. Conduct grows from conviction.

At day's end, ask which duty to Allah you neglected, which right of your own you denied or indulged excessively, and which person's right remains in your care. Fulfil one outstanding duty before adding another task to your list.

Chapter 5 — The Fruit of Faith

Worshipping Allah alone frees the heart from dependence on people's gaze. Knowing that Allah sees us means honesty needs no audience and justice need not weaken before an opponent unable to complain. Belief in recompense gives weight to words and preserves the importance of rights even when people forget them. Unseen goodness is not lost for lack of thanks.

The ending of Ibn Taymiyyah's al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah brings belief and conduct together. It

discusses noble character, maintaining ties with those who sever them, giving, honouring parents, kinship, kindness to neighbours, and rejection of arrogance and aggression. [Al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah, concluding discussion of the character and deeds of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah.] These are practices accompanying sound belief. We may apply this by examining what knowledge does to our treatment of people who disagree with us or cannot repay us. Does it encourage humility and fairness, or become a means of self-importance and contempt?

Allah says: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ وَيُغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ﴿٧١﴾ — meaning:

Believers, be mindful of Allah and speak rightly; He will set your deeds right and forgive your sins. [Al-Ahzab 33:70–71] Mindfulness, sound speech and sound action meet here. A sentence may protect a home, reconcile a quarrel or restore a right; it can also undo these things.

Piety guards against using character merely to win praise. We may be gentle for fear of losing a customer, or humble before someone powerful, then change our tone with someone we do not fear.

Awareness of Allah offers a more enduring measure than immediate advantage. Motives still need work, but we have somewhere to return when we discover our self-interest.

The Prophet connected completeness of faith with excellence of character, and praised those best in character towards their wives. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 1162; al-Tirmidhi graded it hasan sahih.] The particular attention to family is searching: a short encounter allows us to compose ourselves, while years together reveal patience, faithfulness and gentleness.

This does not mean every lapse removes a person from faith, or that agreeable outward behaviour replaces sound belief and worship. The branches of faith support one another. A fault in character calls for repentance and treatment. The more firmly we know that Allah hears and sees, the stronger our reason to restrain obscenity when no person can stop us.

Choose a situation usually known only to Allah: a financial trust, a private conversation, a message you

could erase, or an absent person's right. Practise there the connection between faith and conduct.

Chapter 6 — Learning Character Through Worship

Worship was not prescribed as movement disconnected from the heart and behaviour. Prayer turns us to Allah and His help, and restrains wrongdoing. Fasting requires abstention from what breaks the fast and trains us to restrain familiar impulses. The Prophet warned that if someone does not abandon false speech and acting upon it, Allah has no need of that person's leaving food and drink. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1903] This does not cancel the obligation to fast. It awakens us to a fruit we may have neglected.

Zakah purifies wealth and the person. Allah says: ﴿ خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا ﴾ — meaning: Take charity from their wealth, through which you cleanse and purify them. [Al-Tawbah 9:103] As money leaves the hand, the heart learns not to let possession obstruct mercy. Paying the obligatory

amount while belittling its recipient leaves pride and miserliness still needing attention.

Pilgrimage places restraint in plain view: الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ — meaning: Pilgrimage is in known months; whoever undertakes it in them must abstain from sexual relations, wrongdoing and quarrelling during pilgrimage. [Al-Baqarah 2:197] Crowds, fatigue and differing temperaments test its effect upon us. Care for the rites should be accompanied by care for our hands and tongues.

We should not, however, turn worship into a hurried test by which to condemn others. Someone may pray while still struggling with a harmful habit, then slip and repent. Examine your own conduct without using another's weakness as permission for contempt. Pride can overtake a critic of bad character too.

Bring a particular need to worship. Before prayer, ask Allah to reform your speech. In prostration, seek forgiveness for a wrong. After fasting, consider your impulsiveness. When giving, examine the wish to remind a recipient of your favour or cause

embarrassment. Worship then reaches the concerns of daily life.

This week, connect an established act of worship with attention to one quality. Let ablution remind you of words needing correction, fasting of a quarrel to leave, or giving of the value of discretion. These are aids to self-discipline, not newly prescribed rites or religiously specified repetitions.

Chapter 7 — When Our Virtues Are Uneven

Someone may be financially trustworthy and verbally harsh, merciful with children and unfair to opponents, generous yet hungry for praise. Character is not a single undivided strength. Each quality has its motives, weaknesses and testing grounds. Each person also carries a history of habits, surroundings and interests.

Ibn al-Qayyim traces good character to patience, self-restraint, courage and justice, explaining the virtues that grow from them. [Madarij al-Salikin, station of character, discussion beginning with the statement

that religion is all character.] This helps explain why generosity may coexist with difficulty bearing injury, or quietness with reluctance to defend the wronged. A fault does not make every virtue counterfeit. It calls us to complete what is lacking. Thank Allah for the goodness He has made possible instead of using it to silence someone who points out another kind of harm.

Avoid both cancelling someone's goodness because of a fault and allowing a virtue to shield every fault. Acknowledge good, attribute its enabling to Allah, and address error honestly. Claiming to be frank cannot justify cruelty; claiming a kind heart cannot excuse withholding rights.

Allah says: ﴿فَلَا تَزْكُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى﴾ — meaning: Do not declare yourselves pure; He knows best who is mindful of Him. [Al-Najm 53:32] We need not deny a blessing, but must not become satisfied with a self-created image. People may know our generosity while Allah knows our concealed speech. They may see little achievement while He knows a struggle hidden from everyone.

Useful self-examination is specific. Calling yourself a bad person is vague and may encourage despair.

Recognising that you raise your voice when you feel misunderstood identifies something you can address.

Notice the trigger, choose another response, apologise to those hurt, and review what changes.

We also need people who help us see. Familiar habits become invisible, and fearful silence can be mistaken for approval. A trustworthy friend, candid spouse or wise teacher can serve as a mirror, if we are willing to listen without putting every adviser on trial.

Ask someone trustworthy to name one quality they appreciate and one that hurts them. Do not argue at once. Thank them, then take a day to consider the examples. Accept what is true, even if their manner of expressing it was imperfect.

Chapter 8 — A Measure Beyond Preference

Customs differ in greetings, hospitality, apologies and directness of speech. What one community considers polite may feel cold to another. Islamic law recognises

sound custom and the interests of people in different settings. Custom does not, however, make oppression lawful, turn a lie into truth, or transform backbiting into advice merely because it is widespread.

In al-Risalah, al-Shafi'i explains that declaring something lawful or unlawful must rest upon knowledge, then sets out the sources of inference. [Al-Risalah, fifth discussion of elucidation, passage beginning with the prohibition of speaking about lawful and unlawful without knowledge.] This teaches restraint in judgement before restraint in expression. A soft voice may still make an unfounded religious prohibition, or condemn something merely because it offends personal taste. Where the issue is our own need, fairness allows us to say that something hurts us or does not suit us. We should not elevate every preference into a religious ruling. If unsure, ask those qualified to know; the force of a feeling is no substitute for knowledge.

Revelation protects morality from becoming private taste. We may like someone who agrees with us despite injustice, and call someone harsh for claiming a right. Nor is everything painful an injustice: honest

advice may sting, and refusing a harmful desire may be merciful. Allah says: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ﴾ — ﴿بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ﴾ — meaning: Believers, stand firmly for justice as witnesses for Allah, even against yourselves, your parents or close relatives. [Al-Nisa 4:135]

The same measure forbids defending truth through misconduct. A valid point may be delivered at a moment chosen to expose someone, in words that humiliate, or with false additions. Being right does not permit lying or obscenity. Allah says: ﴿وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي﴾ — ﴿يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ﴾ — meaning: Tell My servants to speak what is best. [Al-Isra 17:53]

Forgiveness and justice require particular care. Forgiveness is a great virtue, but a wronged person's private claim belongs to that person; they must not be pressured to surrender it. Enforcing a right may protect others from recurring harm. Yet demanding justice can also become excessive revenge. Ask what right is established, what response is lawful, and what intention moves you.

Returning to revelation requires knowledge and humility. We cannot select a text that suits our anger and neglect those that restrain it. Evidence must be understood together, with its scope and qualifications, and difficult matters referred to scholars. Good character includes admitting that our first understanding may be incomplete and returning when the truth becomes clear.

For a current dispute, write down your established right, the words you want to use, and the outcome you seek. Have you enlarged the claim? Does the wording humiliate? Is the goal repair or mere victory? Choose the response closest to justice and excellence.

Book Two — The Qur'an and the Formation of Character

Opening Reflection

The Qur'an forms a person in worship, at home, in disagreement, and in the use of money and speech. It commands justice when inclination pulls another way, forgiveness when retaliation is possible, and truthfulness when an immediate escape seems to lie elsewhere. Its accounts of the prophets place meaning within living situations, then return the heart to Allah: guidance comes from Him, to Him we return, and before Him our deeds will be weighed.

We shall consider foundations that belong together. Mercy disciplines strength; justice restrains desire; patience sustains action; truthfulness guards the heart and tongue. Each needs other virtues to support it and protect it from a misleading outward resemblance.

Chapter 9 — A Character Praised by Allah

Allah addresses His Prophet: ﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾ — meaning: You are indeed of magnificent character.

[Al-Qalam 68:4] Divine praise needs no human exaggeration. The verse addresses the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). We read it to recognise his exemplary guidance and follow him, not to award ourselves his distinction.

Al-Tabari explains this magnificent character through the Qur'anic discipline with which Allah instructed His Prophet, also relating its meaning to Islam and its laws. [Jami al-Bayan, commentary on al-Qalam 68:4.] Its scope cannot be reduced to social pleasantness detached from obedience. It includes observing Allah's commands and limits. Ask which Qur'anic command has yet to leave its mark upon your dealings. Benefit comes through love for the Prophet and following him, as well as repeating the praise given to him.

His conduct united inward servitude, upright action and excellent treatment. Asked about his character, Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) answered that

the character of Allah's Prophet was the Qur'an. [Sahih Muslim, 746] Her concise answer points beyond recitation to the presence of its commands, prohibitions and manners in his life.

Mercy, justice, endurance of injury and necessary clarification all belonged to his character. Following him requires more than choosing what suits us while overlooking what calls for a right to be restored or a desire restrained.

Choose one Qur'anic command you know. Where does it appear in your conduct? Identify an act of obedience before moving on to another reminder.

Chapter 10 — Mercy as a Foundation

Allah says: ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ — meaning: We sent you only as a mercy to all worlds. [Al-Anbiya 21:107] The message brought mercy through worship of Allah alone, guidance and justice, freeing people from servitude to desire and created beings. Mercy towards others seeks their good and acts to secure it, whether through forgiveness or prevention of injustice.

Allah also says: ﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا ۖ لَّأَنفَضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَا نَفِضُوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ﴾ — meaning: By mercy from Allah you were gentle with them; had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. [Al Imran 3:159] Gentleness is traced to Allah's mercy, leaving no room for self-admiration. Thank Him when your heart softens instead of regarding the recipient as indebted to your moral superiority.

Complete mercy does not abandon rights. Mercy to an aggressor includes stopping the aggression; mercy to the wronged includes support. Mercy to a family removes harm rather than covering it with beautiful language. Consider consequences as well as immediate comfort.

Find someone who needs practical mercy from you: time, listening, financial help or an end to hurtful behaviour. Do what you can without reminders of your favour, and ask Allah to have mercy on your weakness.

Chapter 11 — Justice with Friends and Opponents

Allah says: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۚ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نَقَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۚ

— meaning: Believers, stand firmly for Allah as witnesses with justice. Do not let hatred of a people cause you to act unjustly. Be just; that is closer to piety. [Al-Ma'idah 5:8] Fairness is most searchingly tested when dislike is strong. Being fair to those we love often serves our own interests too.

In reporting a disagreement, justice refuses to attribute words never spoken. In judgement it applies a consistent measure. At home it prevents power from stripping the vulnerable of their rights. At work it refuses to give credit to favourites and shift blame onto those we dislike.

Justice does not require feelings to vanish. We may hate an action or suffer from an injury, while remaining responsible for our speech, actions and decisions. Acknowledge the pain, then prevent it from producing an extra accusation or excessive punishment.

State the strongest argument of someone with whom you currently disagree, as that person understands it. If you cannot represent it faithfully, listen further before judging.

Chapter 12 — Excellence Beyond What Is Owed

Allah says: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ﴾ — meaning: Allah commands justice and excellence. [Al-Nahl 16:90] Justice fulfils what is due; gracious goodness can extend beyond it. Paying a worker fully honours a right. Appreciation, gratitude and additional help can accompany that payment as further kindness.

Al-Sa'di explains that justice includes duties to Allah and to people, and contrasts obligatory justice with goodness exceeding it. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on al-Nahl 16:90.] This distinction helps us order our actions. It does not mean that everything termed *ihsan* in revelation is optional: excellence can be obligatory in its proper context, as in the hadith that Allah has prescribed *ihsan* in everything. [Sahih Muslim, 1955] Wages are not a

gift from the employer. Giving more after meeting the obligation is a different matter. Confusing the two encourages self-congratulation for a duty poorly fulfilled and demands for gratitude from those merely receiving their own rights. Begin generosity with what you already owe.

Kindness also has limits of ownership and responsibility. Giving away someone else's money or forgiving someone else's claim is no virtue.

Understand what belongs to you and what binds you, then give without injuring another obligation.

The prophetic teaching on excellence includes care in work, gentleness towards living creatures, reducing suffering, and performing tasks without deception. Unseen actions for which no thanks are expected offer a wide field for it.

Today, perform a duty you usually complete at the bare minimum with additional care, even if Allah alone sees that care.

Chapter 13 — Patience and the Restraint of Anger

Allah praises ﴿ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾ — meaning: those who restrain anger and pardon people; Allah loves those who do good.

[Al Imran 3:134] Restraint prevents anger from becoming aggression. Forgiveness relinquishes a personal claim; further kindness may rise beyond it. Not every circumstance requires everyone to attain the same voluntary degree, but injustice is never permitted.

Anger is a human feeling. What matters is where we take it. It may alert us to a neglected right or blind us into multiplying wrongs. The Prophet said, in meaning, that strength does not belong to the wrestler who overpowers others, but to the person who controls himself when angry. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6114; Sahih Muslim, 2609]

Ibn Taymiyyah distinguishes patience in carrying out commands, refraining from prohibitions, and bearing what happens beyond our choice. [Qa'idah fi al-Sabr, opening discussion.] All three may meet in one injury:

bearing its pain, refusing an unlawful response, and fulfilling a duty the quarrel does not cancel. Patience therefore involves more than enduring a feeling, and does not suspend necessary action. Pain may remain while someone exercises real patience and acts well.

Prepare before agitation arrives. Recognise inflammatory words, postpone decisions, and do not publish what you wrote at anger's height. After a mistake, patience may mean accepting the difficulty of apologising and restoring a right.

Choose a personal rule: while angry, no message, financial decision or punishment until you have become calm and reconsidered the situation.

Chapter 14 — Forgiveness That Helps Repair

Allah says: ﴿وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ﴾ — meaning: The recompense for an injury is a corresponding response; whoever forgives and brings about repair has his reward with Allah. [Al-Shura 42:40] Forgiveness is joined here to repair.

Without judgement and restraint, an apparent pardon may encourage further aggression.

Al-Sa'di discusses justice, graciousness and injustice in explaining this verse, connecting the merit of pardon with repair. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on al-Shura 42:40.] A lawful claim differs from excessive revenge; helpful forgiveness differs from letting harm continue. Ask whose right is involved, whether you may relinquish it, and who might suffer afterwards. You cannot forgive away other people's property or safety to appear forbearing. Nor may a claim for fairness become unlawful public humiliation or privately imposed punishment. Seek redress lawfully, and recognise the virtue of pardon in its fitting place.

During the slander against Aishah, Abu Bakr was hurt by Mistah's involvement and swore to stop supporting him financially. Allah revealed: ﴿وَلْيَعْفُوا﴾ supporting him financially. Allah revealed: ﴿وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ﴾ — meaning: Let them pardon and overlook. Would you not love Allah to forgive you? [Al-Nur 24:22] Abu Bakr affirmed his longing for Allah's forgiveness and resumed the

support. May Allah be pleased with them. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4750; Sahih Muslim, 2770]

Forgiveness need not deny pain; it prevents pain from governing indefinitely. The wronged retain their right to seek redress. No one should use the virtue of forgiveness to silence them. When freely chosen in its place, pardon becomes an act of devotion.

Distinguish a right that must be protected, harm you can prevent, and a personal desire you can relinquish. This is more likely to help than a hurried decision either to forgive everything or retaliate.

Chapter 15 — Gentleness in Guidance

Allah instructed Musa and Harun concerning

Pharaoh: ﴿فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لِّئَلَّا يَعْتَدِيَ عَلَیْكَرَ ۚ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ﴾ —

meaning: Speak gently to him, so that he may take heed or fear. [Ta Ha 20:44] If gentle speech was required in calling Pharaoh, how much do family, children and those capable of correction need words that leave the way back open?

The Prophet taught that gentleness beautifies whatever it enters, and its removal disfigures it.

[Sahih Muslim, 2594] Gentleness chooses a fitting means, time and expression. It neither abandons enjoining good nor erases the difference between truth and falsehood.

Explaining ﴿خُذِ الْعَفْوَ﴾, al-Sa'di describes accepting what comes readily in people's character, appreciating available goodness and avoiding burdensome expectations in companionship. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, al-A'raf 7:199; the phrase's meaning is: Take what is readily offered.] Obligations remain distinct from personal expectations. A sincerely affectionate friend may speak little or express gratitude slowly. A different temperament is not automatically a moral failing. The heart finds ease in distinguishing what should be required, what can be accepted generously, and what needs gentle teaching.

We can mistakenly call helplessness gentleness, or impulsiveness religious concern. Genuine gentleness serves a lawful purpose while reducing harm. Compromising the truth merely to remain comfortable or approved is something else.

Revise advice you intend to offer. Remove labels about the person, identify the particular action, explain what is needed, and choose a time when listening is possible.

Chapter 16 — Truthfulness That Takes Root

Allah calls believers to be mindful of Him and remain with the truthful: **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ** ﴿١٩﴾ **الصَّادِقِينَ** [Al-Tawbah 9:119] Truthfulness requires correspondence between report and reality, and extends to intention, resolve and fulfilment. We can avoid an outright lie while selecting half a truth to produce a false impression.

The Prophet taught that truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness to Paradise. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6094; Sahih Muslim, 2607; the cited Arabic wording follows Muslim.] Seeking accuracy, reconsidering our wording and correcting errors strengthen that path.

Confession is not a virtue with which to purchase exemption from consequences. Tell the truth, then

repair the harm, return the money, apologise and accept what justice requires.

Attend to ordinary exaggeration today: an inflated number, undeserved credit or an excuse concealing the actual reason. Do not wait for a spectacular lie before beginning.

Chapter 17 — Keeping Trust and Keeping Our Word

Allah commands: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا﴾ — meaning: Allah commands you to return trusts to those entitled to them. [Al-Nisa 4:58] He also says: ﴿وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا﴾ — meaning: Fulfil the covenant; the covenant will indeed be questioned. [Al-Isra 17:34] A trust may concern money, a confidence, time, work, responsibility or words shared privately.

Faithfulness begins with a clear promise. We often promise merely to please someone in the moment, then discover we cannot deliver. Consider before committing. If genuine inability arises, explain it

honestly rather than leave someone waiting indefinitely.

Trust is especially tested when betrayal could remain undetected: a file easily copied, money passing through our hands, or information whose disclosure could benefit us. Awareness of Allah matters most where outward controls are weakest.

Gather your outstanding promises and begin with the oldest. Fulfil it or speak honestly to its recipient. Another promise does not replace fulfilment.

Chapter 18 — Humility Without Display

Allah describes the servants of the Most Merciful:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ
الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا — meaning: They walk upon the

earth with calm humility, and when the ignorant address them, they answer with peace. [Al-Furqan 25:63] Such calm carries dignity rather than humiliation or weakness. A humble person recognises a blessing without wearing it as a crown of superiority.

The Prophet taught that Allah raises whoever humbles himself for His sake. [Sahih Muslim, 2588] This humility survives without applause. It accepts truth from the young, admits not knowing, serves family and relinquishes precedence to which it has no right.

Pride can wear the appearance of virtue. We may verbally reject praise while inviting more, or describe our shortcomings hoping others will contradict us and celebrate our merits. The remedy is attention to duties and gratitude to the Giver, rather than construction of a humble image.

Accept a valid correction today without an elaborate defence. Thank the person, then correct the mistake without turning the occasion into a long account of yourself.

Chapter 19 — Modesty and Chastity

The Prophet described modesty as a branch of faith. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 9; Sahih Muslim, 35] It encourages leaving what is shameful and fulfilling what is right. It

is not a fear that prevents learning or claiming a legitimate right.

Allah praises Maryam's chastity, and tells how Yusuf sought protection when the wife of al-Aziz tempted him: ﴿مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ﴾ — meaning: I seek refuge in Allah. [Yusuf 12:23] Chastity appeared within temptation, through awareness of Allah, rather than through the absence of temptation.

Today it reaches the gaze, messages, images and private conversations. A screen may make wrongdoing feel less serious because its effects are not immediately visible. Modesty before Allah does not change with location.

Close one opening you know weakens you: an account, a conversation, a concealed online relationship or a habit of looking. Do not endlessly negotiate with a source of harm you already recognise.

Chapter 20 — Choosing the Better

Words

Allah says: ﴿وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ — meaning: Tell My servants to speak what is best; Satan stirs discord between them. [Al-Isra 17:53] Expressions differ in their effect. A true meaning can be delivered in a way that opens a quarrel.

He also says: ﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ﴾ — meaning: Call to your Lord's way with wisdom and good counsel, and debate with them in the best manner. [Al-Nahl 16:125] Such debate preserves truth and the other person's dignity, avoiding ridicule, reproach and words removed from context.

Distinguish correction from humiliation. Correction may be required; the desire to degrade someone serves the ego. Public correction especially needs the question: Can the harm be stopped without exposure? Before sending a disputed reply, read it once in search of truth and once from its recipient's position.

Remove every sentence whose only purpose is to display victory.

Chapter 21 — Guarding the Tongue

Al-Hujurat addresses mockery, insult, offensive nicknames, suspicion, spying and backbiting. Allah says: ﴿وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّبُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ﴾ — meaning: Do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his dead brother's flesh? You would detest it. [Al-Hujurat 49:12]

In explaining the hadith on speech, Ibn Rajab joins speaking good with withholding what is not good. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, commentary on hadith 15.] Silence is not always a virtue: testimony, clarification or a lawful warning may be necessary. We must refrain from forbidden speech and say what duty requires with knowledge and justice. Applied today, factual accuracy alone does not permit publication. A true report may violate privacy or an entrusted confidence. Ask whether it is true, whether you have the right to say it, and how much the situation requires; then avoid unnecessary harm.

The Prophet instructed whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day to speak good or remain silent. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6018; Sahih Muslim, 47] Silence can be worship when speech would be evil, but should not become escape from obligatory testimony or counsel.

Online publication multiplies a sentence's reach. What three people once heard may reach thousands; words remain after anger has passed. Pause before sending, verify before forwarding, and have the courage to remove and apologise for wrongdoing.

Create space between agitation and publication. Where someone's honour or reputation is concerned, establish necessity, truth and the lawfulness of disclosure before publishing.

Chapter 22 — Bringing People Back Together

Allah says: ﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ﴾ — meaning: The believers are brothers, so reconcile your brothers. [Al-Hujurat 49:10] A peacemaker must not become another carrier of conflict. Keep

confidences, verify accounts, identify agreement and avoid promises outside your power.

Allah also says: اَدْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ اَحْسَنُ فَاِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ ﴿٣٤﴾ عَدَاوَةٌ كَاَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ — meaning: Repel with what is better, and the one between whom and you there was enmity may become like a close friend. [Fussilat 41:34] Responding well requires disciplined strength and patience. It does not mean enabling repeated aggression.

Repair sometimes begins by correcting each side's account. An insult may have been inferred from words originally spoken differently. Once the facts are clear, help the person at fault apologise and the wronged person recover a right without excess.

Do not relay a phrase you know will inflame matters. Convey the necessary meaning faithfully, and ask each person for a specific action that makes returning possible.

Chapter 23 — Care for Those Near and Vulnerable

Allah joins honouring parents to worshipping Him alone: ﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾ — meaning: Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and treat parents with excellence. [Al-Isra 17:23] Even an expression of irritation is prohibited. Dutifulness is audible in our tone as well as visible in financial support.

Mercy extends to orphans, people in need, travellers and neighbours. The Prophet reported that Jibril continued urging him to care for the neighbour until he thought the neighbour would be assigned inheritance. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6014; Sahih Muslim, 2624] Such rights do not depend on an ability to repay kindness, which makes them revealing tests of sincerity.

Kindness need not wait for a rare, impressive deed. A relative may need a call, a neighbour relief from disturbance, an elderly person patience with a repeated story, and a worker payment and respect.

Begin with a nearby right. Renew contact, meet a parent's need, or remove a disturbance reaching your neighbour.

Chapter 24 — Schools of Character

Within the Qur'an

Al-Hujurat teaches a community to safeguard reports, reputations and brotherhood. Al-Nur teaches chastity, permission and privacy. Al-Isra gathers guidance on worship, parents, property, life and speech. Luqman shows a father teaching his son faith, prayer, patience, humility and a lowered voice. Al-Furqan portrays the servants of the Most Merciful in worship and daily conduct.

These passages keep character with worship. Luqman's counsel begins by forbidding association of partners with Allah and proceeds through duties to parents, awareness of Allah, prayer, patience and humility. The human being is a whole: what lives within the heart appears in a walk, a voice and a way of dealing with others.

Read slowly enough to ask what concerns you today and how to act upon it. Counting completed pages cannot replace companionship with the Qur'an's guidance while we persist in a known injustice.

Choose one of these surahs, express its ethical commands in your own words, and attend to one for a week. Too many choices need not prevent the first step.

Chapter 25 — Mercy and Firmness in Their Proper Place

Qur'anic virtues belong together. Mercy does not abolish justice; firmness permits no cruelty; forgiveness cannot cancel other people's rights; enforcing a right does not authorise spite. Trouble begins when one quality is applied indiscriminately to every circumstance.

Ibn al-Qayyim explains how justice places courage, generosity and forbearance where they belong and protects them from excess and deficiency. [Madarij al-Salikin, station of character, discussion beginning with the statement that religion is all character.]

Balance is not a midpoint between truth and falsehood or a permanent compromise pleasing both sides. Justice may require full payment of a right; firmness may require immediately stopping aggression. Seek what revelation and the circumstances require, rather than conduct that looks calm regardless of its effect. Inability to defend the vulnerable is not forbearance, and the power to humiliate is not courage.

Allah says: ﴿مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾ — meaning: Muhammad is Allah's Messenger; those with him are firm against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves. [Al-Fath 48:29] Conduct must fit its context within the limits of Islamic law. Firmness can prevent recurring injury; gentleness can open a closed heart.

Feeling alone cannot determine the right response. We need knowledge, attention to consequences and scrutiny of self-interest. Before punishment, ask whether it is lawful and proportionate. Before pardon, ask whether it repairs or increases harm. Before silence, ask whether it preserves peace or abandons someone wronged.

For a difficult decision, consult someone knowledgeable and trustworthy who is not swept up in your feelings. Give the complete facts, seek the just course, and commit yourself to what becomes clear.

Book Three — The Worth of Good Character in the Sunnah

Opening Reflection

The Sunnah brings Qur'anic meanings close to the heart through concise teaching and visible example. When believers learn that good character weighs heavily in the balance and belongs to completeness of faith, they should understand the treatment of people as worship. These promises cannot be detached from worshipping Allah alone and fulfilling obligatory duties. Harm to others is no peripheral concern.

Chapter 26 — Completing Righteous Character

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, in meaning: I was sent to complete righteous character. [Al-Bukhari, al-Adab al-Mufrad, 273; graded authentic by al-Albani.] The message did not arrive among people devoid of every virtue. Faithfulness, courage and generosity existed, but

could be mixed with tribal partisanship, ostentation and injustice. Revelation directed virtue towards Allah's worship and disciplined it with justice.

Courage may defend a tribe in wrongdoing; generosity may seek fame; loyalty may serve an unlawful agreement. Character must be sound in its foundation, purpose and effect. Courage should defend truth, giving should seek Allah's pleasure, and faithfulness must not assist sin.

We need neither despise existing goodness nor accept it without examination. Acknowledge the good, give it sound direction, and remove corrupt motives.

Refinement does not erase personality; it directs its strengths towards what Allah loves.

Consider a quality for which others praise you. Does it survive without praise? Does it stop where wrongdoing begins?

Chapter 27 — Character and Completeness of Faith

The Prophet connected the most complete faith with the best character, and praised those best towards

their wives. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 1162; al-Tirmidhi: hasan sahih.] Faith increases and decreases, and its effects appear in behaviour.

Marriage receives particular attention because home reveals what a gathering may conceal. Needs recur; fatigue exposes temperament; there is little opportunity to prepare an impressive appearance. Consider whether your family is safe from your tongue and hand.

Good character does not establish perfection in every respect, nor does pleasantness replace sound belief and worship. The connection is that stronger faith bears fruit in mercy, justice and faithfulness. A recurring fault should send us back to the work of the heart.

Ask your family when conversation with you feels safe and when they fear your anger. Listen without defending your image.

Chapter 28 — What Weighs Heavily

The Prophet taught that nothing is heavier in the believer's balance on the Day of Resurrection than

good character, and that Allah hates obscenity and foul speech. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 2002; al-Tirmidhi: hasan sahih.] Praise of virtue is joined to rejection of its opposite, so the aspiration must include abandoning harmful words.

Many such deeds are quiet: swallowing a sentence, keeping a confidence, bearing a mistake, returning money its owner did not know was missing. They may attract no attention, yet are preserved for the balance in which no atom's weight is lost.

Obscenity is not frankness, and abuse is not strength. Truth can be clearly expressed without violating dignity. An insult remains ugly even when a room applauds it.

Remove one angry expression from your vocabulary. Make a definite choice rather than waiting for your mood to change. Apologise for each lapse while working to end the habit.

Chapter 29 — Nearness to the Prophet

The Prophet said that among those most beloved to him and seated closest to him on the Day of

Resurrection would be those best in character. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 2018; al-Tirmidhi: hasan gharib through this route.] Love for him should lead us to follow his guidance, including his treatment of people.

Repeated declarations of love do not excuse persistent injustice. Returning to gentleness and truthfulness gives substance to following him. Harm requires repentance and repair, rather than concealment beneath a slogan.

Nor does the hadith make universal approval our goal. Someone demanding wrongdoing may dislike a faithful refusal. Remain truthful, fair and gentle, and examine whether personal desire has entered under the name of defending what is right.

In a dispute, choose the answer closer to the Prophet's truthfulness, justice and gentleness, even if it gratifies you less.

Chapter 30 — The Rank of One Who Fasts and Prays

The Prophet taught that through good character a believer can attain the rank of one who fasts and

stands in prayer. [Sunan Abi Dawud, 4798; graded authentic by al-Albani.] This honours daily dealings and the breadth of divine favour; it does not invite abandonment of fasting or prayer.

Ibn Rajab draws attention to the need of those devoted to worship for good character, without which piety remains incomplete. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, commentary on hadith 18.] Additional prayer or fasting cannot excuse harshness at home or neglected trusts. Preserve worship and seek its fruit in the duties that follow it. Examine whether optional activities have crowded out another person's obligatory right, or whether you measure devotion only through what comes easily while neglecting a more difficult struggle.

Fasting and night prayer discipline bodily desire and love of rest. Good character disciplines anger, the wish to win, miserliness and pride. Daily effort within a family may feel harder than an act performed alone.

Do not make this comparison a source of excuses. Preserve an act of worship Allah has made possible. If lengthy voluntary worship is difficult, do not belittle a

kind word or patience with people. Allah's bounty is vast.

Serve someone today with an intention of worship: listen, meet a need, or accept a task you usually leave to others. Recognise character as devotion rather than mere politeness.

Chapter 31 — Piety and Good Character

Asked what most leads people into Paradise, the Messenger answered: mindfulness of Allah and good character. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 2004; al-Tirmidhi: sahih gharib.] Awareness of Allah and treatment of people are brought together.

Piety without an effect upon conduct needs examination. Helpful outward behaviour does not replace Allah's right to belief and worship. Ask Him for both inward watchfulness and a tongue and hand from which His servants are safe.

The two meet in a single action: refusing to backbite someone absent, or fulfilling a trust when a shortfall could be concealed.

Choose a deed seen only by Allah whose benefit reaches someone else: returning a trust, defending an absent person, or correcting an undiscovered mistake.

Chapter 32 — A Home in the Highest Part of Paradise

The Prophet promised a home on the outskirts of Paradise for leaving contentious argument even when right, a home in its middle for leaving lies even in joking, and a home in its highest part for good character. [Sunan Abi Dawud, 4800; graded hasan by al-Albani.]

The teaching addresses habits easily dismissed: argument driven by the desire to win, and lies presented as humour. We can be right about an issue and still damage our hearts and manners through prolonged contention.

Leaving such argument does not mean abandoning scholarly explanation or defending the wronged. It means recognising when clarification has ended and only a display of answering power remains. Notice

when your words have become fuel for self-importance.

End an unproductive exchange respectfully: the disagreement is clear, and you do not want it to become a quarrel. Turn to something beneficial.

Chapter 33 — When Speech Becomes Harm

The Prophet said, in meaning, that a believer is not habitually insulting, cursing, obscene or foul-mouthed. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 1977; al-Tirmidhi: hasan gharib.] This warns against qualities contrary to the required completeness of faith becoming our identifying habits.

Insult attacks a person instead of addressing an action. Frequent cursing makes its seriousness feel small. Obscenity transgresses in word and meaning. These faults may disguise themselves as humour, criticism or defence of religion.

Temporary silence alone cannot treat their roots: contempt, superiority, accumulated anger and

company that treats abuse as wit. Repent of the words and close the paths that lead back to them.

Review a recent quarrel, written or spoken. Mark the attacks on the person rather than the conduct.

Rephrase what needs saying and leave the rest.

Chapter 34 — Gentleness Beautifies

The Prophet taught that gentleness beautifies whatever it enters, and its absence disfigures it. [Sahih Muslim, 2594] It helps truth reach people without changing the truth.

In teaching, gentleness considers the learner and proceeds appropriately. In management, it makes expectations clear without humiliation. At home, it preserves safety during correction. Harshness may appear quicker while creating resistance and fear, and teaching people to hide their mistakes.

Gentleness is not always slow. Protecting someone may demand immediate, firm intervention. Necessary firmness remains within its purpose; violence adds personal anger to what justice requires.

Lower your voice in the next correction, identify one action and allow a response. Observe whether understanding improves when fear recedes.

Chapter 35 — Modesty Belongs to Faith

When the Prophet passed a man reproaching his brother for being modest, he told him to leave him, for modesty belongs to faith. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 24; Sahih Muslim, 36] It prevents shameful conduct and is therefore good.

Inability to speak truth or ask for knowledge is different. Aishah praised the women of the Ansar because modesty did not prevent them from learning their religion. [Sahih Muslim, 332]

Children need this distinction. Teach boundaries, bodily dignity, careful speech and awareness of Allah, while preserving the ability to report harm and seek help. Fear of people is not the object of moral education.

If you remained silent today, ask whether reverence for what is right or fear for your image caused it.

Where speech is a duty, find respectful words and speak.

Chapter 36 — Strength When Anger Comes

The Prophet located real strength in controlling oneself when angry rather than overpowering another in wrestling. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6114; Sahih Muslim, 2609] The struggle turns from mastery of another body to governance of oneself.

Ibn Rajab explains the instruction not to become angry through both cultivating forbearance before anger arises and refusing to carry out its dictates after it arises. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, commentary on hadith 16.] A momentary technique cannot suffice while pride and irritability are nourished all day. Nor does admiring patience replace a practical way to stop harm during a dispute. A useful application is a courteous request for time, followed by refraining from writing what you would regret when calm. This is suggested training, not a rite with a prescribed duration or number.

Self-control need not deny anger. It prevents anger from directing tongue and hand. Leave the setting, delay a decision or invite a trusted person into the discussion if appropriate. These can be uses of strength.

Afterwards, repair matters. Simply becoming calm does not remove the effect of words on a family. Face the consequences, apologise and restore rights.

Notice your earliest bodily signal: quicker breathing, a rising voice or a clenched hand. Let it prompt a pause before the action follows.

Chapter 37 — A Counsel for Every Place

Abu Dharr reported the Prophet's counsel, in meaning: Be mindful of Allah wherever you are; follow a bad deed with a good one that erases it; and treat people with good character. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 1987. The electronic text consulted gives al-Tirmidhi's judgement as *hasan sahih*; al-Nawawi transmits it as *hasan*.] Watchfulness, repentance and human dealings meet in one instruction.

Wherever you are removes the division between public and private conduct. Following wrongdoing with good prevents despair, but does not erase another person's claim. Where a wrong concerns someone else, restoring the right and seeking release from the claim belong to repair.

Good treatment extends beyond a chosen circle. Relationships still have their laws and limits: kindness cannot mean obedience in sin or silence about injustice.

If you slip today, return promptly. Seek forgiveness, identify an action that repairs the harm, and do it before resolve cools.

Chapter 38 — Reading the Teachings Together

These authentic and sound reports present good character as worship that weighs heavily, reflects the completeness of faith, and draws a believer nearer to the Prophet. They also locate its practice in guarding speech and leaving contentiousness, lies and obscenity.

Read the teachings together. Character's merit does not cancel obligations; gentleness does not erase lawful limits; forgiveness cannot surrender another's rights. Remain hopeful of Allah's bounty and aware of shortcomings, rather than declaring yourself virtuous because you memorised a hadith.

Let each report become a question: Where do I argue for victory? Where do I speak abusively? Who feels safe with me at home? What hidden deed reflects my awareness of Allah? The teachings then become measures for living.

Memorise one hadith from this book and accompany it for a week. Each evening record a moment in harmony with it and a moment that fell short. Seek forgiveness and renew the intention to improve.

Book Four — His Character Was the Qur'an

Opening Reflection

In the Prophet's life, character becomes faith lived. Mercy reached his home; justice did not spare the influential while burdening the weak. Those who served him, lived with him and opposed him bore witness. The Sunnah preserves apparently small moments of great significance: a smile, attentive listening, pardon, correction without humiliation.

We attend to the established accounts without invented dialogue or claims about what a report leaves unspoken. Then we return to ourselves: what would sincere following change at home, at work and in disagreement?

Chapter 39 — Aishah's Testimony

Sa'd ibn Hisham asked Aishah about the Messenger's character. She asked whether he read the Qur'an, then explained that the character of Allah's Prophet was

the Qur'an. [Sahih Muslim, 746] This gives us a measure for reading his biography: complete obedience to its commands and distance from its prohibitions.

Al-Nawawi explains this through acting upon the Qur'an, observing its limits, adopting its manners, reflecting on its accounts and contemplating it. [Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers' Prayer, chapter on night prayer, commentary on 746.] Revelation is connected to living. If we read about justice and act unjustly in a quarrel, something between knowledge and action remains unrepaired. If a Qur'anic account seems merely a past event, we have missed its invitation to reflection. After reciting, ask what command to fulfil, prohibition to observe and quality to practise.

Aishah's testimony came from shared life, with its rest, fatigue, worship and ordinary dealings. The testimony of someone close gains further force when the other Companions' accounts agree with it.

Read his patience alongside ﴿فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا﴾ — meaning: Be patient with a beautiful patience. [Al-

Ma'arij 70:5] Read his pardon alongside ﴿فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ﴾ — meaning: Pardon them and overlook. [Al-Ma'idah 5:13]

For each episode you read, identify the quality it displays and one place in your own life that needs it.

Chapter 40 — Mercy Towards His Community

Allah says: ﴿لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ﴾ — meaning: A Messenger from among yourselves has come to you; your hardship weighs upon him, he is deeply concerned for you, and towards believers compassionate and merciful. [Al-Tawbah 9:128] He sought their guidance and lawful ease.

He explained that were it not for hardship upon his community, he would have commanded use of the tooth-stick at every prayer. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 887; Sahih Muslim, 252; the cited wording follows Muslim's route through Zuhayr.] Love for a practice did not lead him to impose unnecessary difficulty. He also shortened a prayer he had intended to lengthen

after hearing a child's crying, out of concern for the mother. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 707; Sahih Muslim, 470]

Mercy accompanied complete delivery of the religion and understanding of people's circumstances.

Following him means neither using firmness to burden dependants needlessly nor using ease to discard obligations.

Review a demand you make of someone in your care. Is it necessary, appropriately timed and clearly explained? Remove difficulty that the duty itself does not require.

Chapter 41 — At Home

The Prophet said that the best are those best to their families, and that he was best to his family. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 3895; al-Tirmidhi: hasan gharib sahih.]

Long companionship, where courtesy is less prepared and duties more frequent, reveals goodness.

Aishah related that he raced with her while travelling. [Sunan Abi Dawud, 2578; graded authentic by al-Albani.] She also described his drinking from the same place on a vessel from which she had drunk

while menstruating. [Sahih Muslim, 300] Affection became perceptible through tenderness, consideration and a sense of being valued.

When his son Ibrahim died, his eyes filled with tears. He said, in meaning, that the eyes shed tears and the heart grieves, while we say only what pleases our Lord. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1303] Honest sorrow accompanied guarded speech and faithful acceptance.

Give your family an intentional share of your good character today, rather than whatever remains after work and everyone else. Sincere appreciation or undivided listening may begin a repair.

Chapter 42 — Service Within the Household

Asked what the Prophet did at home, Aishah said that he served his family, then went out to prayer when its time arrived. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 676] His great responsibilities and position did not keep him from helping.

Household service diminishes no one's dignity. It is participation and mercy, not a favour to be repeatedly

announced. Admiration for the Prophet should reach the simple task we might otherwise regard as beneath us.

His living also displayed humility and contentment. Months passed without a cooking fire being lit in his households, whose food was dates and water. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6459; Sahih Muslim, 2972] This describes freedom from dependence on luxury, not a prohibition of lawful good things.

Do a household task without waiting for thanks. Do not later turn it into ammunition in a quarrel.

Chapter 43 — Children, Orphans and the Vulnerable

When the Prophet kissed al-Hasan ibn Ali, al-Aqra ibn Habis remarked that he had ten children and had kissed none of them. The Prophet answered that whoever shows no mercy will receive no mercy. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 5997; Sahih Muslim, 2318] Coldness was not to be confused with strength.

He carried Umamah, daughter of Zaynab, during prayer, lifting her when standing and setting her

down when prostrating. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 516; Sahih Muslim, 543] Worship and tenderness met naturally. Children belong within the life of family and community.

He also promised nearness in Paradise to the person caring for an orphan, indicating his index and middle fingers. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6005] Care should safeguard the child's rights and dignity rather than become a passing display.

When correcting a child, come down to the child's level and describe the action instead of labelling the child. Let teaching preserve safety; fear need not be your first instrument.

Chapter 44 — The Servant and the Worker

Anas reported ten years of service during which the Messenger never spoke to him with an expression of irritation or reproached him for doing or leaving something. [Sahih Muslim, 2309] Ten years reveal an enduring disposition.

The account does not mean instruction was absent. The Prophet taught, guided and prayed for Anas. Mistakes were not made an occasion for degradation. Watching both intention and language helps distinguish correction from humiliation.

Workers occupy a less powerful position, making their treatment especially revealing. Restraining yourself before the powerful and venting at an employee is no mastery of anger.

Review your last correction of an employee. Did you identify the mistake and the required action, or attack the person's dignity? Repair both the wording and its effect.

Chapter 45 — Teaching Someone Who Does Not Know

When a Bedouin urinated in the mosque and people rose towards him, the Prophet told them to leave him, then ordered water poured over the place. He explained that they were sent to make things easier, not harder. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 220] He restrained their reaction while ensuring purification of the place.

Knowing a ruling includes learning how to correct a wrong without producing greater harm. Indignation by itself can make a situation worse.

A merciful teacher distinguishes ignorance from defiance and an isolated lapse from a pattern. The mosque's sanctity remained protected through a wiser and gentler response.

Before correcting, ask whether the person knows the rule and what least harmful response will stop the mistake while preserving dignity.

Chapter 46 — Forbearance Under Personal Injury

A Bedouin pulled the Prophet's cloak so violently that its edge left a mark on his shoulder, then demanded a share of Allah's wealth. The Prophet turned, smiled and ordered that he be given something. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3149; Sahih Muslim, 1057]

The injury was visible, yet he responded with a smile and a gift. A request made badly need not provoke personal revenge. Gentleness has a place precisely where force is available.

This does not require ignoring every aggressor or silencing every injured person. It teaches people in authority not to punish a personal affront under the cover of maintaining order.

Separate an established right from the claimant's poor manner. Honour the right, then address the manner proportionately.

Chapter 47 — Pardon When Retaliation Was Possible

Aishah asked whether the Prophet had experienced a day harder than Uhud. He recalled his rejection when he approached Ibn Abd Yalil ibn Abd Kulal. Jibril informed him that Allah had heard his people's response and sent the angel of the mountains. Offered the crushing of his opponents between the two mountains, the Prophet instead expressed hope that Allah would bring from their descendants people who worshipped Him alone. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3231; Sahih Muslim, 1795]

He acknowledged the severity of the day, while looking beyond rejection to possible future guidance.

Pain did not confine his view of what Allah might bring about.

At the conquest of Makkah, he announced safety for those entering Abu Sufyan's house, laying down arms or closing their doors. [Sahih Muslim, 1780] This invites reflection on safeguarding lives when possessing power and honouring declared protection.

When you can retaliate, distinguish what protects a right from what anger alone adds. Leave the excess for Allah's sake.

Chapter 48 — Justice Without Favouritism

When a woman of Banu Makhzum stole and Quraysh sought intercession for her, the Prophet warned that earlier communities were destroyed by excusing influential thieves while punishing weak ones. He declared that even Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, would face the prescribed punishment if she committed that offence. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3475; Sahih Muslim, 1688]

Justice is tested by family, status and advantage. Mentioning someone beloved closed the door to favouritism.

This teaching protects the vulnerable against selective enforcement. Justice is a public mercy even when its lawful application is painful. Its judicial rulings belong to their proper legal setting.

Examine a rule at home or at work. Does its application change with the person? Explain a legitimate exception clearly; otherwise apply the rule consistently.

Chapter 49 — A Reputation for Truth

Heraclius asked Abu Sufyan whether the Prophet had been accused of lying before proclaiming his message. Abu Sufyan answered no. Heraclius observed that someone who did not lie about people would not then lie about Allah. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 7] Testimony from an opponent before his conversion was especially telling.

At the first revelation, Khadijah reassured the Prophet by recalling his established conduct: maintaining

kinship, helping the burdened and destitute, honouring guests and assisting people through rightful hardships. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3; Sahih Muslim, 160] These were qualities she had lived beside.

Trust is formed before crisis. Consistent truthfulness in satisfaction and anger gives words weight. Choosing truth only when convenient undermines that trust despite occasional honesty.

Correct a small misleading claim that gives you undeserved credit. Do not wait for a dramatic test of integrity.

Chapter 50 — Keeping Covenants and Remembering Kindness

At al-Hudaybiyah, the Prophet accepted terms difficult for some Companions and honoured them. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2731–2732] Guided by knowledge and revelation, he did not dissolve the covenant because its immediate appearance was painful.

He also remembered Khadijah's kindness after her death, maintained ties with her friends and spoke of

her merit. Aishah described the jealousy she felt because of how often he remembered Khadijah.

[Sahih al-Bukhari, 3818; Sahih Muslim, 2435]

Faithfulness resists easy forgetting. Death or the ending of advantage should not erase someone's contribution, and shared achievements should not be claimed as ours alone.

Remember someone whose kindness helped you long ago. Renew contact, pray for them or thank them appropriately, without exaggeration.

Chapter 51 — Accessible in His Humility

Anas reported that a bondwoman of Madinah could take the Messenger by the hand and lead him where she needed. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6072] His exalted prophetic station did not distance him from people with needs.

A woman experiencing mental difficulty told him she needed his help. He invited her to choose a street and remained until her need was addressed. [Sahih Muslim, 2326] Al-Nawawi explains that this occurred in a public street where passers-by could see them,

while her private concern remained outside their hearing; it was not forbidden seclusion. [Al-Minhaj, commentary on Muslim 2326, Book of Virtues, chapter on the Prophet's closeness to people.]

Humility did not diminish reverence for his message. His Companions loved and honoured him, while he taught them not to raise him beyond the station Allah had given him. Following this guidance frees leaders from dependence on ceremonial importance.

Remove an unnecessary barrier between yourself and those in your care. Make asking a question possible without fear of humiliation.

Chapter 52 — Modesty and Clean Speech

The Prophet was described as more modest than a sheltered young woman; displeasure could be recognised in his face. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3562; Sahih Muslim, 2320] Modesty guarded his manner without preventing delivery of the message.

Abd Allah ibn Amr reported that he was neither obscene nor deliberately foul, and that he praised

those best in character. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3559; Sahih Muslim, 2321]

Clean speech need not obscure necessary teaching. The Prophet explained matters of purification and married life to men and women with truthful language that conveyed knowledge while preserving modesty.

Examine your jokes and messages for words you would regret seeing in your record of deeds. Stop them before they become habitual.

Chapter 53 — Generosity and Good Company

Ibn Abbas described the Messenger as the most generous of people, especially during Ramadan when Jibril met with him. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6; Sahih Muslim, 2308] His giving increased alongside study of the Qur'an.

Jabir said that when the Messenger was asked for something, he never said no. [Sahih Muslim, 2311] This describes his readiness to give within his

possession and ability, not promises of what he did not possess.

Generosity reaches beyond money to time, a warm reception, patience with requests and teaching. Good company gives another person a real share of our attention instead of making them compete with a phone or another concern.

Give something you value and can spare: money, time or knowledge. Keep the deed discreet where possible and do not follow it with reminders.

Chapter 54 — Courage Without Cruelty

At Hunayn, when people fell into confusion, the Prophet remained firm, declaring his prophethood and his descent from Abd al-Muttalib. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2864; Sahih Muslim, 1776] This was steadfastness where some had fled before returning.

When a sound frightened Madinah at night, he reached its source before others and returned to reassure them. [Sahih Muslim, 2307] He did not send others into danger while remaining safely behind.

His courage did not harden his heart. Mercy and bravery belonged together. Commendable strength protects rather than enjoys frightening the vulnerable.

Accept a responsibility you have been leaving to others, without despising someone who hesitated or felt afraid.

Chapter 55 — A Smile and Attentive Listening

Jarir ibn Abd Allah reported that after he became Muslim the Messenger never barred him from access, and always smiled upon seeing him. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3035; Sahih Muslim, 2475] Warmth opened the heart naturally.

The Prophet joked while speaking only truth, as reported in al-Tirmidhi. Humour eases life when truth and dignity remain intact. It becomes harmful when founded on lies, ridicule or exposure of a confidence.

The account of his remaining with the woman until her need was met also teaches attention. [Sahih Muslim, 2326] Listening is more than bodily silence

while the mind wanders; it requires presence sufficient to understand and respond.

Put your phone aside in the next conversation and do not interrupt. If you joke, let your companion's dignity set the boundary.

Chapter 56 — Correcting Without Humiliating

Muawiyah ibn al-Hakam al-Sulami spoke during prayer while new to Islam. Afterwards the Prophet taught him. Muawiyah said he had never seen a better teacher: the Prophet neither rebuked him harshly, struck him nor insulted him. [Sahih Muslim, 537]

The learner remembered the manner of instruction alongside its content. Mercy did not obstruct clarification, and clarification required no abuse.

Teachers, parents and managers can learn from this.

Helpful correction identifies the action, explains what is right and considers the learner's knowledge and circumstances. Gathering years of mistakes into one confrontation closes the heart, even if the individual complaints are true.

Correct one mistake briefly, then ask the learner to explain their understanding. Let learning, rather than superiority, be your purpose.

Chapter 57 — Counsel and Reproach

The Prophet sometimes addressed widespread errors without naming individuals, asking what was the matter with people who behaved in a certain way. This occurred when some avoided a concession he had taken. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6101; Sahih Muslim, 2356] Clarification could be joined to protecting identities.

Privacy does not always prohibit identifying responsibility. Sometimes the right requires it. But an adviser's anger should not turn treatment of a fault into public exposure.

Ibn Hazm counsels against giving advice on condition that it be accepted. [Al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar fi Mudawat al-Nufus, section on friendship and counsel.] Wanting someone's good does not make our opinion the price of their dignity. This does not abolish duties of teaching or protection, or settle

every situation after one conversation. It exposes self-interest when a disappointed adviser becomes harmful. Ask whether you are angry because truth was neglected or because your words were not sufficiently honoured.

Measured reproach does not make a lapse a permanent definition of someone who has returned and repaired it.

Decide who actually needs to hear the advice. Do not widen the audience or retell the reproach after its purpose has passed.

Chapter 58 — The Opponent and the Captive

Before becoming Muslim, Thumamah ibn Uthal was captured and tied to a pillar of the mosque. The Prophet spoke with him on successive occasions, then ordered his release. Thumamah went away, washed and returned to embrace Islam. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 462; Sahih Muslim, 1764]

He declared that the Prophet's face, formerly most hateful to him, had become most beloved. [Sahih

Muslim, 1764, narrated by Abu Hurayrah.] We can reflect on how kindness may open a heart, without adding scenes the account does not contain.

The Prophet accepted truth, maintained covenants with non-Muslims and prohibited treachery. Fair treatment does not require affirming error or abandoning protection against aggression.

When discussing matters with an opponent, do not attribute an opinion they never expressed. Explain what you believe true while preserving fairness and dignity.

Chapter 59 — Character in Leadership

Allah commanded His Prophet: ﴿وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ﴾ — meaning: Consult them in the matter. [Al Imran 3:159] Although supported by revelation, he consulted where judgement had its proper place. Listening gathers others' understanding and teaches shared responsibility.

He appointed Usamah ibn Zayd to command an army including senior Companions and defended his fitness

for the role. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4469; Sahih Muslim, 2426] Youth did not cancel genuine qualification.

A leader should carry responsibility for decisions, rather than claim success and assign failure to the team. Choose trustworthiness and competence, not abundant praise.

Consult someone affected by an upcoming decision, then explain the decision and responsibility clearly. Let consultation have real substance.

Chapter 60 — Limits in Conflict and Faithfulness in Peace

Finding a woman killed during an expedition, the Prophet prohibited killing women and children. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3014; Sahih Muslim, 1744] Even war remained governed by religious limits; anger authorised no unrestricted violence.

Honouring covenants remained fundamental despite the difficulty seen at al-Hudaybiyah. Peace chosen from strength is not cowardice when it serves a lawful interest; force that lawfully prevents oppression is not thereby aggression.

These matters require knowledge. Rules of war must not be transferred to everyday disputes, nor its language applied carelessly to differences of opinion or trade. Respect for revelation includes placing texts in their proper setting.

Honour a small commitment today: an appointment, a confidence or an agreed condition. Disregard for small promises weakens larger ones.

Chapter 61 — Reading the Prophetic Life Truthfully

Love for the Prophet requires truthfulness about him. Established accounts of his merit are enough; emotional appeal cannot authenticate a story. Return reports to their sources, establish their standing and resist filling scenes with imagined details.

Do not invent words for him, describe unreported inward feelings, or build a virtue upon an unsupported tale. Reverence includes speaking where we know and remaining silent where we do not.

Read situations completely. Separating mercy from justice or firmness from its necessity distorts

following. Established narrations and scholarly explanation protect against selective use.

Do not publish a moving story merely because it moves you. Seek its source. Benefit from what is established and leave what is not; the authentic accounts are sufficient.

Book Five — Noble Character in the Lives of the Prophets

Opening Reflection

Qur'anic accounts of the prophets guide the heart. They do not exist merely to satisfy curiosity. Allah tells us what benefits us and leaves details unmentioned. We should draw only what the text supports, without filling the scene with unestablished names or conversations.

The prophets, peace be upon them, are chosen examples of worshipping Allah alone, patience, truthfulness and returning to Him. Where the Qur'an relates a judgement or correction, read with respect for prophethood and attention to their prompt return, rather than as an occasion for disparagement.

Chapter 62 — Adam and the Honesty of Repentance

After eating from the tree, Adam and his wife prayed:

﴿رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾

my people night and day, but my calling only increased their flight. [Nuh 71:5–6] He also described public and private approaches. Centuries of calling cannot be measured by immediate results. His patience was renewed work.

He told his people: ﴿إِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي وَتَذَكِيرِي﴾ — meaning: If my presence and reminding you of Allah's signs weigh upon you, then upon Allah I rely. [Yunus 10:71] Rejection changed neither the message nor his dependence upon his Lord.

Advice cannot command hearts. Our part is truthful explanation, a fitting approach and patience; guidance belongs to Allah. Remembering this guards a teacher against despair and against harshness born of demanding an immediate result.

Change an unfruitful method of counsel without changing the truth: a calmer time, fewer words, then space for reflection.

Chapter 64 — Ibrahim's Forbearance and Hospitality

Allah describes Ibrahim: ﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ﴾ — meaning: Ibrahim was indeed forbearing, tender-hearted in supplication and continually returning to Allah. [Hud 11:75] When the angels came as guests, ﴿فَرَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ﴾ ﴿فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ﴾ — meaning: He went quietly to his household, brought a fat calf and placed it near them, asking whether they would eat. [Al-Dhariyat 51:26–27] He acted without making guests ask for their needs.

Forbearance did not compromise faith. He declared: ﴿إِنِّي بَرَاءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ﴾ ﴿إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي﴾ — meaning: I am free of what you worship, except the One who created me. [Al-Zukhruf 43:26–27]

A tender heart, clear explanation and a generous hand can coexist with firmness in belief. Neither kindness requires agreeing to falsehood nor conviction requires coldness.

Honour a guest or someone in need through action.
When refusing wrongdoing, speak clearly without mockery.

Chapter 65 — Isma'il's Faithfulness and Patience

Allah says: ﴿وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ ۖ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا ۖ وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا﴾ — meaning: Mention Isma'il in the Book. He was true to his promise and a messenger and prophet. He instructed his family in prayer and zakah and was pleasing to his Lord. [Maryam 19:54–55] His faithfulness was established conduct, and his care reached his home.

Ibn Kathir and al-Sa'di favour identifying the son offered for sacrifice as Isma'il, while exegetes differ over the identification. [Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim, al-Saffat 37:101; al-Sa'di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, 37:101–102.] When Ibrahim told his son of the dream, the son answered: ﴿يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ۖ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾ — meaning: Father, do as you are commanded; Allah willing, you will find

me among the patient. [Al-Saffat 37:102] Patience was entrusted to Allah's will, not personal strength alone.

Keeping promises requires memory, responsibility, respect for time and honest notice of inability. Saying “Allah willing” expresses need of Him, not an excuse to neglect commitments.

Fulfil an old promise or ask its recipient to release you. Attend to an existing obligation before adding another.

Chapter 66 — Ya'qub and Beautiful Patience

When his sons brought Yusuf's shirt, Ya'qub said:

﴿فَصَبِرْ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ﴾ — meaning:

Beautiful patience is my course, and Allah's help is

sought against what you describe. [Yusuf 12:18] Later

he said: ﴿فَصَبِرْ جَمِيلٌ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا﴾ —

meaning: Beautiful patience; perhaps Allah will bring

them all back to me. [Yusuf 12:83] Patience held both

need and hope.

His eyes whitened with grief, yet he said: ﴿إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو﴾ — meaning: I complain of my anguish and sorrow only to Allah. [Yusuf 12:86] Grief can coexist with patience when speech remains guarded and the heart turns to Allah.

He continued hoping and sent his sons to search, saying: ﴿وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ﴾ — meaning: Do not despair of relief from Allah. [Yusuf 12:87] Patience still acts within what is possible.

Name your sorrow in supplication, then identify an available means and take it, without denying pain or objecting to your Lord.

Chapter 67 — Yusuf's Chastity and Excellence

With doors closed and temptation offered, Yusuf said: ﴿مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ﴾ — meaning: I seek refuge in Allah. [Yusuf 12:23] Chastity begins with seeking protection and taking the means of escape, rather than trusting ourselves alone.

Unjust imprisonment did not prevent his fellow prisoners recognising him among those who do good:

﴿إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾ [Yusuf 12:36; meaning: We see you among the doers of good.] Later, with power over his brothers, he said: ﴿لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَيُّومَ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ﴾ — meaning: No reproach is upon you today; may Allah forgive you. [Yusuf 12:92]

Al-Sa'di explains that Yusuf removed reproach instead of continually reminding them of the offence, then prayed for their forgiveness. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, 12:92.] Consider how frequently an old mistake returns as a weapon after we claim to have forgiven. This reflection adds no unreported feelings to Yusuf's account and does not equate every dispute with his. It teaches us to avoid humiliating someone through the past while preserving legitimate rights and protection.

Chastity in privacy, trustworthiness in responsibility, kindness in prison and pardon in authority belonged to one life. Character need not depend on status.

Do not make one person's injustice permission to wrong another. Close a known opening to sin and treat those uninvolved in your injury well.

Chapter 68 — Musa's Strength, Trustworthiness and Return

One woman told her father of Musa: ﴿يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ﴾ — meaning: Father, employ him; the best person to employ is strong and trustworthy. [Al-Qasas 28:26] Ability accomplishes work; trustworthiness protects that ability from betrayal. Responsibility needs both.

Returning in anger and grief, Musa cast down the tablets and took hold of his brother. When matters became clear, he prayed: ﴿رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ﴾ — meaning: My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy. [Al-A'raf 7:151] Read with respect, noticing prompt return and a prayer embracing both brothers.

In accompanying al-Khidr, Musa accepted a condition of learning and apologised after forgetting it at the first incident. Learning needs both vigorous questioning and humility in returning.

When new information exposes an incorrect judgement, correct the decision instead of defending the old reaction. Seek forgiveness from anyone hurt.

Chapter 69 — Harun in a Time of Trial

Harun explained to Musa: ﴿يَا ابْنَ أُمِّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِذُنُوبِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي﴾ — meaning: Son of my mother, do not seize my beard or head. I feared you would say I had divided the Children of Israel and disregarded your word. [Ta Ha 20:94]

He also explained the pressure he faced: ﴿إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونِي فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْأَعْدَاءَ﴾ — meaning: The people overpowered me and nearly killed me; do not let enemies rejoice over me. [Al-A'raf 7:150]

His gentleness did not affirm their error. He had told them: ﴿يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي﴾ — meaning: My people, you are only being tested by it. Your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me. [Ta Ha 20:90] Clear conviction accompanied attention to consequences.

When disagreeing about what best serves a situation, explain facts and purpose before accusing motives. Allow the other person to reconsider the complete picture.

Chapter 70 — Dawud and Sulayman in Justice and Gratitude

Allah instructed Dawud: ﴿يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ

— meaning: Dawud, We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge people truthfully and do not follow desire. [Sad 38:26] Desire can distort a judgement even where information exists.

After mentioning Sulayman's understanding of the case of the field, Allah says: ﴿وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا﴾ — meaning: To each We gave judgement and knowledge. [Al-Anbiya 21:79] One correct judgement does not require stripping another learned person of merit.

Hearing the ant, Sulayman smiled and prayed: ﴿رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ﴾ — meaning: My Lord, enable me to thank You for Your blessing. [Al-Naml 27:19]

Knowledge and power returned him to gratitude to their Giver.

Before a decision, name the direction in which self-interest may pull. Seek information from someone who gains nothing by agreeing with you.

Chapter 71 — Ayyub's Patient

Supplication

Ayyub prayed: ﴿أَنِّي مَسْنِيَ الضُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾ — meaning: Affliction has touched me, and You are the most merciful of those who show mercy. [Al-Anbiya 21:83] He named the harm and sought divine mercy without objection. Allah relieved him and praised him: ﴿إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ﴾ — meaning: We found him patient; an excellent servant, repeatedly returning to Us. [Sad 38:44]

Complaining to Allah expresses worship and need. Resentful objection and forbidden speech undermine patience. Describing illness to a doctor and seeking treatment are legitimate means.

Do not invent the illness's nature, duration or appearance where no established text supplies them.

The revealed lesson is sufficient: affliction, patience, supplication, mercy and relief.

Present your need to Allah honestly and respectfully, then take available means. Patience is no name for neglected treatment or hiding a need from someone able to help.

Chapter 72 — Yunus and Returning Through Praise

In darkness Yunus prayed: ﴿لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ — meaning: None is worthy of worship but You. Glory be to You; I have indeed been among the wrongdoers. [Al-Anbiya 21:87] Allah answered: ﴿فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ — meaning: We answered him and saved him from distress; thus We save believers. [Al-Anbiya 21:88]

Worshipping Allah alone, declaring His perfection and admitting wrongdoing lead the soul away from stubborn self-defence. Instead of blaming circumstances for an action's consequences, return by acknowledging your own part.

Al-Sa'di explains ﴿ فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴾ — meaning: Had he not been among those who glorified Allah [al-Saffat 37:143] — in terms of Yunus's worship before hardship and his glorification in the whale's belly. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, commentary on 37:143.] From that explanation we may reflect that worship in ease prepares us for hardship. Remember Allah in well-being, and return in trial through faith, supplication and repentance. Let this prayer accompany repentance for a present wrong. Do not repeat it while deliberately continuing the same cause without resolve to leave it.

Chapter 73 — Zakariyya and Yahya

Zakariyya called privately upon his Lord: ﴿ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴾ — meaning: My Lord, my bones have weakened and my head is white with age, yet I have never been disappointed in calling upon You. [Maryam 19:4] Honest need accompanied hope in Allah.

In this account Allah says: ﴿إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي﴾ — meaning: They hastened to good deeds, called upon Us with hope and fear, and were humble before Us. [Al-Anbiya 21:90] Prompt goodness can arise from a reverent heart.

Of Yahya, Allah says: ﴿وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا﴾ — meaning: We gave him tenderness from Us and purity; he was devout and dutiful to his parents, neither tyrannical nor disobedient. [Maryam 19:13–14] Knowledge and judgement accompanied mercy and humility.

Keep a private supplication between yourself and Allah, and make care for parents visible in an action. The inward prayer should bear outward fruit.

Chapter 74 — Isa's Servitude and Kindness

Speaking in the cradle, Isa said: ﴿إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لِّي جِبَارًا﴾ — meaning: I am Allah's servant. He has given

me the Book, made me a prophet and blessed me wherever I am. He has enjoined prayer and zakah upon me as long as I live, and kindness to my mother; He has not made me tyrannical or wretched. [Maryam 19:30–32]

He began with servitude to Allah. Blessing brings benefit beyond one gathering or season; prayer and zakah accompany life, and care for a mother belongs to righteousness.

We believe in Isa as Allah's honoured messenger and servant, remaining with the Qur'an and authentic Sunnah. Reverence requires neither exaggeration about him nor disrespect in opposing exaggeration.

What recurring benefit accompanies your presence at home and at work? Choose an ordinary service rather than an occasion awaiting a photograph.

Chapter 75 — Learning from the Prophets

The Qur'an is our foundation, explained by the authentic Sunnah. Interesting detail does not become

knowledge merely by attracting curiosity. We need not fill revelation's silences.

The prophets exemplify faith, worship and character. Read divine correction in their proper station and with scholarly explanation, without harsh labels or diminishing comparisons.

Keep lessons within their setting: Nuh's patience in calling his people, Yusuf's pardon after being given authority, Ayyub's complaint to Allah. Learn without erasing the differences between their circumstances and ours.

Following begins in fitting actions: Adam's admission, Isma'il's faithfulness, Yusuf's chastity, Yunus's return, and Yahya's and Isa's care for parents.

Choose one prophet and read the relevant Qur'anic passages completely. Record a quality, its evidence and a practical action. Leave unmentioned what Allah has not told us.

Book Six — The Companions and the Formation of a Generation

Opening Reflection

Revelation and companionship with the Prophet shaped the Companions' truthfulness, generosity and readiness to return to what was right. They were not infallible, yet Allah praised them and the Sunnah records their responsiveness to guidance.

Read their accounts with respect and fairness. Neither inflate their virtues nor use painful conflicts to disparage them. Establish the report, refer difficult matters to scholarly explanation, and seek what reforms our own souls.

Chapter 76 — Abu Bakr

Allah identifies the Prophet's companion in the cave through the words: **إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا** — meaning: He said to his companion, “Do not grieve; Allah is with us.” [Al-Tawbah 9:40] Abu Bakr's

truthfulness appeared in steadfastness, mercy and giving.

After Mistah's involvement in the slander against Aishah, Abu Bakr swore to stop the support he had provided because of Mistah's poverty and kinship.

The verse called for pardon and asked whether believers would not love Allah to forgive them:

﴿وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ﴾ [Al-Nur 24:22] He affirmed that love and resumed the support. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4750; Sahih Muslim, 2770]

His pardon was a response to revelation amid pain touching his family and daughter's honour. Character becomes real when truth asks something contrary to anger.

Where Allah's command touches your own hurt, distinguish protecting a right from satisfying personal resentment.

Chapter 77 — Umar

Umar's strength did not prevent correction. Hearing Hisham ibn Hakim recite al-Furqan differently from

what he had learned, he reacted strongly, then brought him to the Prophet. When the Prophet approved both recitations, Umar accepted the explanation. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4992; Sahih Muslim, 818]

Concern for the Qur'an and an immediate reaction were followed by submission to clarification. Virtue does not require never feeling strongly; it requires not letting feeling block correction.

He also reconsidered his disagreement with Abu Bakr over fighting those withholding zakah, accepting Abu Bakr's argument. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1399–1400]
Status did not prevent a declared change of view.

When evidence shows you were mistaken, acknowledge the clearer understanding plainly. You need not preserve an illusion of never being wrong.

Chapter 78 — Uthman

The Prophet asked whether he should not show modest regard for a man before whom the angels themselves showed modest regard. [Sahih Muslim,

2401] Uthman's modesty did not prevent major responsibilities.

Al-Bukhari records his reminding the Companions of his contributions to the well of Rumah and the army of hardship, which they affirmed. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2778] Modesty and generosity can support useful action together. Giving needs an intention protected from display.

Consider lasting public needs, and what money or time you can contribute. Your name need not appear everywhere that your benefit reaches.

Let modesty preserve boundaries rather than excuse neglected duty. Support a good cause without requiring people to know the size of your contribution.

Chapter 79 — Ali

At Khaybar, the Prophet announced that he would give the banner to a man who loved Allah and His Messenger and was loved by them, through whom Allah would grant victory. He gave it to Ali. [Sahih al-

Bukhari, 4210; Sahih Muslim, 2406; the cited wording follows al-Bukhari.]

When sending Ali to Yemen as a judge, the Prophet prayed for guidance of his heart and firmness of his tongue, and instructed him to hear the other party as he had heard the first. [Sunan Abi Dawud, 3582; graded hasan by al-Albani.] A claimant's eloquence or personal closeness is no substitute for hearing both sides.

Ali returned to the revealed teaching, instructed others and warned against exaggeration concerning himself. His established kinship, companionship, striving and knowledge need no invented stories.

Do not decide on one account alone, even from someone dear to you. Give the other person a full hearing and judge fairly.

Chapter 80 — Khadijah

When the Prophet returned trembling from Hira, Khadijah reassured him that Allah would not disgrace him, recalling his care for kin, the burdened, the

destitute and guests, and his help in rightful hardships. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3; Sahih Muslim, 160]

Her reassurance rested on long knowledge of his conduct. She then acted, taking him to consult Waraqah ibn Nawfal. Sincere support combines remembered evidence of good with an appropriate practical step.

The Prophet continued remembering her merit and maintaining ties with her friends after her death. Her faithfulness left an enduring place in his life.

When someone you love is unsettled, do not deny the fear. Recall real goodness you know in them and help with the next practical step.

Chapter 81 — Aishah

During the slander, Aishah turned to Allah. Her innocence was revealed in al-Nur. She related that she knew Allah would vindicate her, but had not imagined Qur'an would be revealed concerning her. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4750; Sahih Muslim, 2770]

Among the most learned Companions, she was consulted on hadith, law and the Prophet's household

life, continuing to teach after his death. Knowledge was a trust she carried.

Her questions and examination of reports served preservation and understanding of the Sunnah. Accuracy belongs to scholarly sincerity. Suffering injustice does not remove a person's right to weep, pray and hope for relief.

When conveying knowledge, distinguish what you heard from what you inferred. When wronged, do not let pain justify accusations unsupported by evidence.

Chapter 82 — Fatimah

The Prophet described Fatimah as part of him and said that angering her angered him. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3714] She experienced hardship in household work and sought assistance.

When she asked for a servant, he taught her and Ali remembrance before sleep through glorifying, praising and magnifying Allah, describing it as better for them than a servant. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3705; Sahih Muslim, 2727] Asking for help remained

legitimate, while remembrance offered provision amid fatigue.

During his final illness he spoke privately to her, and she wept; he spoke again, and she laughed. He told her of his approaching death and that she would be the first of his family to follow him. [Sahih Muslim, 2450, through Urwah from Aishah. Al-Bukhari, 3623 –3624, relates the private conversation with another detail of the glad tidings.]

Where exhaustion cannot be entirely removed, take available help and preserve the heart's provision. Do not let hardship spoil your speech with those nearest you.

Chapter 83 — Abu Ubaydah

The Prophet declared that every community has a trustworthy one, and that the trustworthy one of this community was Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4380; Sahih Muslim, 2419; the cited wording follows Muslim.]

His selection to accompany the delegation of Najran gave practical expression to that trust. Moral praise

becomes fitness for responsibility. Trust cannot reasonably be demanded without a record of faithfulness.

Responsibility also needs competence. Good intentions do not suffice if someone accepts work they cannot perform and loses people's rights. Abu Ubaydah brought integrity and ability together.

Do not accept a trust beyond your capacity without learning and assistance. Once accepted, put its owners' interests ahead of convenience and image.

Chapter 84 — Ibn Mas'ud

Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud said he learned more than seventy surahs directly from the Messenger. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 5000] He carried and taught that knowledge.

The Prophet asked him to recite, explaining that he loved hearing the Qur'an from another. When Ibn Mas'ud reached ﴿فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ﴾ — meaning: How will it be when We bring a witness from every community? [Al-Nisa 4:41] — the

Prophet's eyes were shedding tears. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 5049–5050; Sahih Muslim, 800]

Teacher and learner both appear here as attentive recipients of revelation. Knowledge should not prevent the heart from listening.

Listen to beneficial knowledge from someone younger or less prominent. Familiarity with the subject need not make your heart absent.

Chapter 85 — Ibn Abbas

The Prophet prayed that Allah would grant Ibn Abbas understanding of religion. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 143] As a boy he stayed with his aunt Maymunah to observe the Prophet's night prayer. When he stood to the left, the Prophet moved him to his right. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 183; Sahih Muslim, 763]

Youth did not prevent attentive learning, and the senior Companions later recognised his knowledge. Good teaching allows a young person to ask safely and tests understanding without belittlement. Learning needs listening before speaking.

Ask clearly about something you do not know. If teaching, do not ridicule a beginner's question.

Chapter 86 — Anas

Ten years of service allowed Anas to preserve details of the Prophet's treatment that brief companionship could not reveal. He remembered that the Prophet never addressed him with an expression of irritation. [Sahih Muslim, 2309]

He also preserved the Prophet's prayer for abundant wealth and children with blessing, and witnessed its effects. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6344; Sahih Muslim, 2481] He carried this knowledge into a long life through which the Followers benefited.

Faithfulness remembers kindness and conveys what was learned. It need not conceal a fault whose disclosure is required; it asks for justice in memory and narration.

Remember a teacher or benefactor through an accurate teaching, supplication or renewed contact. Time need not erase gratitude.

Chapter 87 — Salman and Abu al-Darda

Seeing Abu al-Darda's strenuous worship crowding out duties to himself and family, Salman reminded him that his Lord, himself and his family each had rights, and each should receive its due. The Prophet affirmed Salman's counsel. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1968]

This was a brother's attentive advice, directing worship rather than abandoning it. Abu al-Darda's acceptance and referral to the Prophet reflected sincerity in seeking what was right.

Optional devotion can be poorly ordered: prolonging it while neglecting dependants, or becoming exhausted and venting at home. Revealed balance protects all the rights involved.

Review the rights of Allah, yourself and family in your day. Restore one displaced through excess elsewhere, without dropping an obligation.

Chapter 88 — The Ansar

Allah says: ﴿وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ﴾ — meaning: They give others preference over

themselves even when in need. [Al-Hashr 59:9] The account of an Ansari offering the Prophet's guest his household's food accompanies this verse. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3798; Sahih Muslim, 2054]

Al-Sa'di connects the Ansar's preference for others with love for the Emigrants and hearts free of resentment over what they received. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, 59:9.] Giving should be accompanied by affection and generosity of spirit. Ask not only what you gave, but how you treated the recipient afterwards and whether you welcome good reaching them through someone else. Do not use selflessness to dispose of dependants' rights or neglect an obligation.

The Prophet affirmed his attachment to the Ansar, declaring that if others took one valley and the Ansar another, he would take the Ansar's way. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 3778; Sahih Muslim, 1059] After Hunayn he addressed their feelings with truthful words recalling Allah's favour and their companionship.

Give someone preference in something you value and may lawfully give. Fulfil prior duties first, and protect the deed from reminders of your favour.

Chapter 89 — Repentance and Repair

Ka'b ibn Malik remained behind from Tabuk without excuse. While others offered excuses on the Prophet's return, he told the truth. He endured fifty nights of exclusion until Allah revealed acceptance of his repentance. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4418; Sahih Muslim, 2769]

After relief, Ka'b offered to give away his wealth as part of repentance. The Prophet advised keeping some, as that was better for him. [The same reports.] Repentance follows guidance; it is not an impulse to punish oneself beyond what is prescribed.

A lie may ease the present while delaying deliverance. Truth may be painful initially and lead towards tranquillity. Where another person's right is involved, tears alone do not replace restoration or the owner's pardon.

Repair an incomplete apology: name the wrong, do not blame the injured person, and explain the action you will take to mend it.

Chapter 90 — Disagreement Among the Companions

The Prophet instructed that none should pray Asr until reaching Banu Qurayzah. Some understood the literal instruction and delayed; others understood an instruction to hurry and prayed on the way. He reproached neither group when told. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 4119; Sahih Muslim, 1770. Al-Bukhari's wording mentions Asr; Muslim's mentions Zuhr.]

This does not validate every disagreement. It illustrates room for qualified interpretation where the wording bears differing readings. Clear evidence still requires acceptance.

The Companions also experienced painful conflict and were not infallible. Sunni teaching preserves love and respect for them, asks Allah's pleasure for them and refrains from disparaging engagement in their

disputes, recognising their exceptional precedences and virtues without inventing a history free of error.

In a legitimate interpretive disagreement, do not turn alleged error into accusations of sinfulness or betrayal without right. Discuss the view while respecting the person's dignity and previous goodness.

Book Seven — The Early Generations and the Discipline of the Soul

Opening Reflection

The Followers inherited the Companions' knowledge and passed it onwards. Their lives direct us towards learning, worship and people's rights, and awaken our need for humility, restraint and self-examination. Not everyone discussed here belongs to the generation called the Followers: Sufyan, Ibn al-Mubarak, al-Fudayl, Bishr and Ma'ruf came later. What joins these chapters is the education that connects knowledge with action.

Chapter 91 — Al-Hasan al-Basri and Self-Examination

Al-Hasan al-Basri was a leading Follower, whose learning and admonition are described by al-Dhahabi. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, 4:563 onwards.] Let the counsels of the early generations return us to

ourselves, under Allah's command: ﴿وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ﴾ — meaning: Let every soul consider what it has sent ahead for tomorrow. [Al-Hashr 59:18]

Self-examination prepares for the final account; it is neither self-contempt nor a general declaration of inadequacy.

Name the action, examine its motive and effect, then repair it. Repeating that we fall short while restoring no right and changing no habit can become another defence.

Write about one moment: what you said, why you said it, who was hurt and what can be repaired today.

Chapter 92 — Ali ibn al-Husayn and Scrupulous Living

Ali ibn al-Husayn was a scholar of the Prophet's household. Al-Dhahabi transmits Ibn Sa'd's assessment of his reliability, trustworthiness, abundant narration and scrupulousness. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, 4:387–388.] Honourable lineage accompanies the responsibility to act; it does not replace it.

Hidden kindness helps treat dependence on an image.
An unseen deed remains between servant and Lord
and exposes our hunger for praise. Forbearance
likewise becomes visible when retaliation is possible
and we choose what better serves the situation.

Keep one good deed hidden this week without
hinting at it afterwards. Include an unspoken hurtful
word among that hidden goodness.

Chapter 93 — Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib and Dignity

Sa'id was a leading jurist of Madinah, described by al-Dhahabi as its scholar and foremost Follower of his time. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, 4:217 onwards.] His scholarly standing invites reflection on the dignity learning needs: calm verification, respect for questions and freedom from chasing fame or quarrels. This is a lesson for us, not an invented scene attributed to him.

Scholarly manners include admitting ignorance. A learner should not measure knowledge by the number

of answers offered. Withholding an uncertain answer can be an act of trust.

Say “I do not know” when appropriate. If possible, direct the questioner to someone qualified.

Chapter 94 — Urwah, al-Qasim and Care in Learning

Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and al-Qasim ibn Muhammad were Madinan jurists who learned from Aishah. She instructed Urwah to question Abd Allah ibn Amr. After hearing his report about the taking away of knowledge, she asked Urwah to repeat the enquiry the following year; he returned with the same account. [Sahih Muslim, 2673] Kinship did not replace verification, nor was a repeated question treated as an embarrassment.

Attribute learning to its sources and distinguish a teacher's wording from your understanding. Let learners respect the gathering and teachers respect the questioner, without using a simple question to display superiority.

When passing on a benefit, name its source when known. Do not give your interpretation the standing of the text itself.

Chapter 95 — Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz and Public Trust

Al-Bukhari records Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's letter instructing Abu Bakr ibn Hazm to collect and write the Messenger's hadith, fearing the disappearance of knowledge and scholars. [Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on how knowledge is taken away, heading before hadith 100.] Authority can preserve benefit for others rather than merely serve its holder.

The responsibility we may learn here includes protecting knowledge from bias and restoring established rights. Good intentions must reach money and decisions. Justice has costs, and a person in authority especially needs to hear how decisions affect the vulnerable; abundant praise can conceal what needs repair.

Provide a safe way for people affected by your decisions to speak. Correct established harm without retaliating against the adviser.

Chapter 96 — Ibn Sirin and Responsibility for Words

Muhammad ibn Sirin said that this knowledge is religion, so we should consider from whom we take our religion. [Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter explaining that transmission chains belong to religion; report through Hammad ibn Zayd from Ayyub and Hisham. The consulted electronic page labels it 26, while its chapter numbering gives 25.] Influence and large audiences do not establish accuracy. Responsible speech refuses to turn suspicion into fact or relay harmful information without need.

An exciting story requires particular care. Rapid circulation proves neither truth nor innocence of responsibility for each person forwarding it. Allah commands: ﴿فَتَبَيَّنُوا﴾^{رَسُولُ} — meaning: Verify. [Al-Hujurat 49:6]

Stop one unverified report. Do not disguise its transmission as a question if the question itself spreads the accusation.

Chapter 97 — Sufyan al-Thawri and the Continuing Struggle

Sufyan al-Thawri was an imam in hadith and law. Al-Dhahabi transmits through Waki his acknowledgement that nothing had been harder to treat than his own soul, sometimes working against him and sometimes with him. [Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliya*, 7:5, through Waki from Sufyan; al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, 7:258, whose wording is followed.] The statement acknowledges repeated effort rather than a state beyond examination. Abundant knowledge is no certificate that every motive is sound.

Seeking prominence can appear without seeking office: resentment when another receives credit, or choosing a subject that displays our strength instead of serving people's need.

Welcome a correct insight voiced by someone else today and credit them by name. Notice the response within you without excusing it.

Chapter 98 — Ibn al-Mubarak on Good Companionship

Al-Tirmidhi transmits Ibn al-Mubarak's explanation of good character as a cheerful face, offering goodness and withholding harm. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, Book of Kindness and Ties, chapter on good character, 2005. This is Ibn al-Mubarak's statement, not a prophetic hadith.] These meanings gather everyday companionship: a welcoming expression, kindness carried into action and harm held back. One aspect may be easy while another remains neglected. Hospitality cannot cover dishonesty; generosity cannot cover abusive speech; abstaining from harm does not excuse refusing necessary help when able. A cheerful face does not oblige a grieving person to conceal sorrow, or authorise judgement from a passing expression. It asks us not deliberately to make people feel despised or burdensome. Someone

exhausted can explain that courteously and still answer kindly. A smile does not replace a right, but may help fulfil it without harshness or self-importance.

Offering goodness includes knowledge, time, reconciliation and practical service. These are applications of the meaning rather than further words attributed to Ibn al-Mubarak. Giving is tested when no praise returns. Do we still want others to benefit, or resent their failure to notice us? Inability does not require the impossible: decline honestly and, where possible, direct someone towards help.

Withholding harm asks us to examine the power held in a tongue, position, money or knowledge of secrets. Even without a large benefit to offer, we may refuse oppression, ridicule or betrayal. Restraint is not passivity where preventing harm is our duty. Offer the good within reach, withhold the evil within your power, and safeguard people's dignity and rights.

Consider an approaching meeting. How will you receive the person? What help can you offer? What harm should you prevent? These questions bring an

early scholar's concise counsel into life; they are no certificate of our virtue. May Allah give us sincere warmth, selfless giving, and hands and tongues from whose harm people are safe.

Chapter 99 — Al-Fudayl ibn Iyad and Self-Admiration

Al-Fudayl belonged to those known for learning and worship whose life al-Dhahabi records. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, 8:421 onwards.] Reading the lives of worshippers returns us to the quality and acceptance of deeds. Allah says: ﴿لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا﴾ — meaning: To test which of you is best in deed. [Al-Mulk 67:2] Quantity does not compensate for a corrupt intention or departure from what Allah prescribed.

Self-admiration sees the deed and forgets the help that enabled it, sees others' shortcomings and forgets its own. Treat it with gratitude, concern for acceptance and attention to outstanding rights.

After doing good, thank Allah for enabling it. Do not seek an audience. Ask forgiveness for its deficiencies.

Chapter 100 — Bishr and Ma'ruf

Bishr ibn al-Harith and Ma'ruf al-Karkhi were notable ascetics of Baghdad from generations after the Followers. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, Ma'ruf's biography, 9:339 onwards; Bishr's, 10:469 onwards.] Their lives invite us to ask what worldly things the heart needs and what lawful means have become distractions from duty.

Renunciation concerns the heart's relationship with worldly life, not a particular appearance or poverty sought for itself. Wealth may be possessed without possessing its owner; outward simplicity may still conceal dependence on people's gaze.

Leave one unnecessary preoccupation that crowds out a duty. Do not make its abandonment a subject of self-display.

Chapter 101 — Reading Ascetic and Biographical Works

Books of asceticism, biographies and generations contain great treasures, but their reports are not

equally established. Seek the earliest source, examine transmission and compare routes. Fame alone does not establish a saying's attribution.

A meaning supported by sound evidence needs no doubtful story for decoration. Leaving out an unestablished attribution protects truthful authorship.

Ask about the source before sharing a moving account. If its origin is unknown, use an independently sound meaning without attributing the uncertain story.

Book Eight — The Four Imams and the Responsibilities of Knowledge

Opening Reflection

The four imams sought understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah, learned, taught and left the community a great inheritance. Their differing settings and methods invite reflection on scholarly responsibility and freedom from partisanship. Loving them requires no claim of infallibility; preferring one view does not cancel another imam's right to respect and supplication.

Chapter 102 — Abu Hanifah in Learning and Trade

Abu Hanifah al-Nu'man ibn Thabit was an imam of jurisprudence in Kufah. Al-Dhahabi reports, from al-Ijli and others, that he traded in khazz cloth. [Siyar A'lam al-Nubala, 6:390 onwards.] Learning and

commerce together remind us that trust in the marketplace belongs beside trust in religious speech.

Al-Dhahabi explicitly affirms his mastery of jurisprudence and its subtleties at the biography's conclusion. [Siyar, 6:403.] This is the biographer's scholarly assessment. Reflecting on a teacher's responsibility leads us to dignity that keeps knowledge above personal victory: listening to questions, considering arguments and teaching without humiliation. Honour for the imams should deepen our respect for evidence and for learners.

Forbearance does not weaken an argument. It hears carefully and distinguishes seeking truth from seeking victory. Scrupulous trade likewise requires consistency between what someone teaches and how they earn. Those discussing lawful and unlawful must examine their own transactions.

Interpretive disagreement can remain without dishonouring the imam. Someone preferring another jurist's view need not distort Abu Hanifah's life, and a devoted admirer need not treat every favourable story as fact. Study seriously, understand a view's grounds

before objecting, and maintain proper manners in discussion.

Compare your teaching with your work. Do you condemn deception yet exaggerate a service? Demand faithfulness yet neglect payment or appointments? Let admiration for earlier scholarship change present conduct.

Represent an opponent's argument fairly before answering. When selling, disclose a defect even if silence would increase the profit.

Chapter 103 — Malik and the Courage Not to Know

Malik, imam of Madinah, combined hadith and jurisprudence. Abu Zur'ah al-Dimashqi transmits from al-Walid ibn Utbah, from al-Haytham ibn Jamil, that Malik was asked forty-eight questions and answered “I do not know” to thirty-two. [Abu Zur'ah, al-Tarikh, part five, the report through al-Walid and al-Haytham; also al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 8:77.] Demand for an immediate answer did not displace scholarly trust.

The point is not silence for its own sake. An honest limit safeguards the questioner where knowledge is uncertain. Beyond legal questions, confidence does not qualify someone to speak on everything. “I do not know” can serve another person better than an initially pleasing, ultimately harmful guess.

Reverence for learning fears speaking about Allah without knowledge. It respects hadith, listens carefully and resists turning every question into an instant ruling. Refusing an answer may show greater responsibility than producing one.

This requires courage before expectations. People think well of you, then ask about something beyond your competence. Improvised words may preserve your image briefly, while others carry their consequences. Saying that research is needed keeps learning in its proper place and teaches that honest questions deserve more than manufactured certainty.

Learners should not embarrass teachers into constant answers, or criticise consulting a reference or referring to a specialist. Teachers should distinguish a

transmitted statement, an interpretation and an unresolved issue.

Write down an unanswered question for research.

Honest silence is better than false assurance.

Chapter 104 — Al-Shafi'i and Fairness to Another View

Fairness begins by recognising the limits of our own knowledge. Assuming we have exhausted a subject makes an unexpected question feel threatening. Not knowing another person's evidence does not prove that evidence absent.

Al-Shafi'i explains that knowledge of the Sunnah is distributed across the scholarly community; one person may lack what another possesses. [Al-Risalah, fifth discussion of elucidation, on the collective breadth of knowledge and differences among individuals.] This encourages intellectual humility: what has reached me is not the boundary of what another can know. Understand the basis of a disagreement before accusing stubbornness. Such fairness does not equalise unsupported views; it seeks

evidence sincerely. Returning to truth adds knowledge rather than constituting defeat.

We need not pretend agreement where it does not exist. We owe justice and freedom from insult. After hearing each other, people may retain different qualified judgements and still cooperate in good. Where the truth becomes clear, acceptance honours the purpose of the discussion.

Treating every objection as a personal slight closes learning and invites hurtful replies. Separate the view from its holder. A disagreement does not erase known merit. Leave the other person room to reconsider without gloating.

Not all disagreements are slight or equally supported. Scholars clarify and correct, but sound explanation needs no injustice. Represent the argument accurately, remain steady under objection, and admit error when it appears.

Enter one discussion intending to learn truth even from another's tongue. If it becomes clear, acknowledge the change.

Chapter 105 — Ahmad in Trial

Sources describe Ahmad's imprisonment and beating during the controversy over the createdness of the Qur'an. His son Salih transmits his statement releasing the deceased person from his claim for having beaten him. [Salih ibn Ahmad, *Sirat al-Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, edited by Fu'ad Abd al-Mun'im Ahmad, p. 65.] Firm conviction accompanied forgiveness of a personal injury.

Pardon did not validate the harm or change the doctrinal position he maintained. A wronged person can refuse spite while still naming injustice.

Distinguish relinquishing a claim we own from surrendering Allah's rights or the rights of others.

Do not demand another sufferer possess someone else's strength, or forgive without considering safety and welfare. Help the injured protect themselves, fulfil duties and seek lawful redress. An imam's example may nourish hope; it must not become a weapon of blame against someone still carrying severe injury.

Bring the account back to present duties. Can we remain truthful when it is difficult, fair to opponents, and careful not to extend a quarrel to innocent people? Begin there rather than wishing for a great ordeal whose outcome we cannot know.

Stand by a truth you know while separating its defence from personal revenge.

Chapter 106 — Verifying Accounts of Virtue

Love for the imams does not permit attributing every beautiful story to them. Consult earlier sources, examine chains and context, and do not combine contradictory sayings into a supposed single position.

Their established learning and endurance are sufficient. Removing an uncertain story safeguards an imam's right to accurate attribution.

Do not publish an attributed saying until its source and attribution are established. If only the meaning is independently sound, convey it without the unsupported name.

Chapter 107 — Reverence for Revelation and Readiness to Return

The imams shared reverence for the Qur'an and Sunnah while differing in methods of understanding and ordering evidence. None claimed infallibility or deliberately placed an opinion above a hadith whose authenticity and application had become clear to him.

Ibn Taymiyyah's conclusion to al-Wasitiyyah joins following guidance to noble conduct and rejection of aggression and superiority. [Al-Aqidah al-Wasitiyyah, conclusion.] Respect for revelation should not become self-importance. Affiliation with the Sunnah requires effort towards its justice, mercy and truthfulness. It does not excuse abusive expression. Correcting error remains necessary, with its purpose, means and extent disciplined.

Returning to what is right requires humility and learning. An apparent conflict between a jurist's opinion and a hadith may involve abrogation, qualification or other evidence. A non-specialist's first impression does not settle it. Honour both the revealed text and the means needed to understand it.

When you do not understand a scholar's reasoning, ask a specialist instead of accusing rejection of hadith. Keep your speech within what you know.

Chapter 108 — Manners Between Legal Schools

Recognised juristic disagreement need not destroy brotherhood or imply suspicion of faith. Careful study seeks evidence and a view's foundation; partisanship begins with the desired conclusion and selects support afterwards.

Do not present fine distinctions to general readers merely to provoke quarrels, or treat qualified disagreement as though it were violation of an agreed ruling.

Study a view you reject through its own scholars' sources. Even if your preference remains unchanged, understanding can discipline your tongue.

Book Nine — Virtues, Their Distortions and Their Remedies

Opening Reflection

Knowing the names of virtues does not always tell us what a particular moment requires. Should we forgive or seek a right, speak or remain silent, be gentle or firm? We need to understand a quality's foundation, limits and fruit. Truthfulness cannot justify revealing confidences, mercy cannot approve oppression, and courage cannot recklessly endanger those entrusted to us.

Begin this examination with ourselves. We may condemn pride and reject truthful advice from someone younger, or condemn miserliness while resenting an obligatory expense and welcoming a conspicuous donation. May Allah show us our faults and make that knowledge a means of repair, instead of letting attention to others' faults distract us from our own.

Chapter 109 — Truthfulness and Lies

Allah calls believers to mindfulness and the company of the truthful. [Al-Tawbah 9:119] Such company should make reports, promises and apologies sound. The Prophet explains that truthfulness leads to righteousness and Paradise, while lying opens the opposing path towards wickedness. [Sahih Muslim, 2607]

A lie may begin as a small escape from embarrassment: pretending not to have seen a message, blaming traffic for leaving late, adding a detail to make a story remarkable. A second statement then protects the first, and altering reality becomes a way to preserve an image. Honest admission hurts once and reveals the actual cause that can be corrected. A person acknowledging poor time management can learn; a person who continually manufactures acceptable excuses conceals the fault from repair.

Truthfulness also refrains from certainty where knowledge is absent. “I do not remember,” “I need to check,” and “This is my understanding” give words

their proper weight. Particular care is required in speaking about Allah and His Messenger, and in testimony affecting people's rights. Hearing something does not qualify it for publication; agreement with our opinion does not authenticate it. Represent opponents without removing the words that clarify their intended meaning.

Truth does not require disclosing everything to every questioner. Privacy and confidences have rights. You may honestly decline to discuss a private matter. Nor does frankness require cruelty: describe the error accurately and choose a time and expression that permit understanding.

Notice three temptations to embellish today: a report about yourself, a future promise and an apology. Say what you know and can undertake. Correct an inaccurate sentence before embarrassment draws you into defending it. Faithfulness in small things helps prepare for larger tests.

Chapter 110 — Sincerity and the Wish to Be Seen

Allah commands worship devoted sincerely to Him.

[Al-Bayyinah 98:5] The Prophet teaches that deeds depend upon intentions and each person receives according to what was intended. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1]

Two people may refrain from responding to an insult: one seeks Allah's pleasure and repair; another seeks a reputation for patience or material to use against an opponent later. Similar outward acts can need different inward examination.

Do not abandon action for endless scrutiny. Seek Allah's pleasure, renew that intention when praise becomes attractive, and continue doing good. Waiting for a heart untouched by any passing distraction may become an excuse to stop. Reject the distraction, thank Allah when praised, recognise His enabling and seek acceptance.

An unacknowledged contribution may expose our need for sincerity. We help a relative and resent someone else being thanked, or leave voluntary work when our name is not prominent. Examine ourselves

through such moments without claiming knowledge of other people's hearts. Could we continue if credit went elsewhere? Could we welcome benefit even if our contribution remained unknown?

Publicising goodness may serve teaching, fundraising or accountability. Concealment is not a rule that cancels every benefit. Keep the purpose sincere and protect those involved. A poor person's need must not become a display of our virtue; preserve privacy and obtain permission before sharing a personal story. Sincerity cannot make an unlawful means acceptable. Lying and humiliating a Muslim do not become devotion through a claimed good motive.

Choose a quiet deed: praying for an absent person, removing a shared nuisance or helping without a long story about yourself. Notice the wish to mention it, seek help against it and continue. Where publicity is useful, examine the actual benefit rather than inventing a justification for every wish to appear.

Chapter 111 — Humility, Arrogance and Self-Admiration

Asked about enjoying fine clothing and shoes, the Prophet explained that Allah is beautiful and loves beauty, then defined arrogance as rejecting truth and belittling people. [Sahih Muslim, 91] Fine appearance is not inherently pride; simple clothes do not establish innocence of it.

Ibn Hazm advises treating self-admiration by remembering faults, recognising limitations, considering those more accomplished in what we admire about ourselves, and remembering that every favour comes from Allah. [Al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar, section on treating self-admiration.] This corrects superiority without demanding self-contempt or denial of blessings. A genuinely skilled person may still need correction from a junior employee. Humility accepts truth even through a person the ego would not have chosen.

We may welcome correction from a famous person and resent the same correction from a worker. We may describe ourselves modestly yet punish

disagreement or insufficient praise. Genuine humility appears in receiving truth, fulfilling duties and preserving dignity.

Self-admiration may be absorbed in its own deeds without explicit comparison. It sees patience, learning and worship while forgetting Allah's help and concealed shortcomings. Thank Him, remember outstanding rights, and seek acceptance. Do not treat it by lying about yourself or denying every good gift; attribute the gift rightly and use it well.

Humility does not require a wronged person to accept false descriptions or a qualified person to conceal relevant experience. Explain accomplishments without superiority, claim a right without contempt, accept help when needed, and acknowledge a valid point from someone with whom you otherwise disagree.

How do you answer those serving you? Does your family know the courtesy strangers praise? Can someone younger correct you safely? Thank a corrector before those who heard your mistake, attend to your own needs when able and give clear

credit. The Prophet promised that Allah raises whoever humbles himself for His sake. [Sahih Muslim, 2588]

Chapter 112 — Mercy and Hardness

The Prophet taught that whoever does not show mercy will not receive mercy. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6013] Mercy moves us to fitting help: easing a tired person's load, teaching someone mistaken, protecting someone wronged. Feeling moved is not enough where useful action is within our power.

Contempt for weakness corrupts mercy. An elderly person understands slowly, a child repeats a question, or illness removes an old ability; we may mistake all of it for deliberate inconvenience. Distinguish inability from neglect and ask before blaming. We do not fully know another person's pain.

Mercy does not tell everyone their conduct is right. Allowing oppression harms its perpetrator as well as the injured. Concealing repeated danger is no kindness to the community. A fair administrative decision, prevention or notification of someone able

to protect can be merciful when it seeks repair, remains proportionate and adds no spite.

Those who serve others may need organisation, assistance and lawful rest. Mercy does not require impossible promises followed by resentment. An honest refusal is better than an agreement ending in reproach or broken commitments. Where possible, suggest another source of help while protecting dignity.

Attend to a nearby need: unhurried time with a parent, a fair adjustment for an exhausted employee, or time for a child to understand. Ask Allah for mercy that preserves rights and does not burden its recipients with reminders.

Chapter 113 — Forbearance and Anger

A man repeatedly asked the Prophet for counsel and repeatedly received the instruction not to become angry. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6116] This counsel applies before everyone becomes agreeable or circumstances match our wishes. It returns us to our own responsibility for restraint.

Anger is not always sinful. A believer may be angered by oppression or violated sanctity. A valid cause does not validate every subsequent insult, threat or act of damage. Forbearance prevents excess while preserving the ability to explain and claim rights. Pain need not be denied; it must not become injustice.

Ibn Rajab discusses both reforming anger's causes and refusing its demands once aroused. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, hadith 16.] Progress may appear in quicker return, less harm and readier apology. These observations encourage effort, not exemption from repentance. A smaller wrong remains a wrong needing repair.

Recognise early conditions: repeated interruption, fatigue or fear that silence will look weak. These explain where prevention can begin, without excusing harm. State that you need to calm down and will return to the discussion, specifying an appropriate time where someone awaits a right or decision. Prolonged silence used to punish a family is different. Keep a disagreement focused on what happened and what requires repair. Rehearsing every past failure

turns a correctable action into an attack on identity. Illness, poverty and confidences must not become weapons. Anger does not cancel a trust.

If restraint failed at first, begin again through apology. Name the raised voice or hurtful words and accept responsibility. Repair what you can without making your apology conditional upon the other person's. Afterwards address recurring causes calmly or seek appropriate help.

Chapter 114 — Gentleness and Violence

The Prophet taught that Allah is gentle, loves gentleness and gives through it what He does not give through violence. [Sahih Muslim, 2593] Before becoming severe, ask whether instructions were clear, understood and achievable, and whether your raised voice serves a real duty or merely vents anger.

Soft words cannot make an unreasonable demand gentle. Consider the workload, timing, explanation, opportunity to ask and preservation of dignity. A necessary firm decision, such as stopping a child from harming another or preventing dangerous conduct at

work, can be carried out without insults, exposure or extra punishment for revenge.

A beginner learning worship needs to know what to do. Demonstrate, allow questions, check understanding and distinguish obligations from recommendations. Fear may make learners hide repeated mistakes while teachers mistake silence for comprehension. Gentleness serves accurate learning as well as good conduct.

Impatience for results feeds harshness. An old habit may not disappear in one sitting, nor a skill emerge on a child's first attempt. Repetition and gradual learning can be necessary without tolerating immediate danger. If maintaining calm is repeatedly difficult, obtain trusted help with instruction or supervision and reconsider schedules and tasks.

Change one correction: describe the delayed work and agree on a realistic delivery date instead of judging the person. Listen, record the agreement and observe its effect upon trust and performance. Gentleness is responsible action.

Chapter 115 — Forgiveness, Resentment and Revenge

Allah joins pardon to repair and promises its reward with Him. [Al-Shura 42:40] Forgive only a claim you own, with attention to consequences. Do not surrender others' rights or leave someone vulnerable under continuing aggression.

The injured are not confined to either forgiving and re-entering danger or claiming a right while living in hatred. Lawful redress, protective boundaries and resistance to spite can coexist. A private claim may be forgiven while caution remains. Trust needs demonstrated safety, not words alone.

Resentment can make an opponent's unrelated suffering pleasing, or lead us to reject evidence clearing them of another accusation. Justice must govern beyond the first injury. The Qur'anic prayer asks: ﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا﴾ — meaning: Place no resentment in our hearts towards those who believe. [Al-Hashr 59:10]

Do not pressure the hurt into silence through praise of forgiveness. Offer encouragement gently and preserve their lawful options and protection. Equally, boundaries should not excuse severing every relationship after one lapse. Distinguish an isolated mistake, recurring pattern and urgent danger.

Practise with a small personal offence whose pardon creates no harm. Stop reminding its author of it. Forgiveness should not become a debt collected at every disagreement. If seeking redress, specify the claim and refrain from insults and exposure of confidences. In either course, seek a sound heart and justice anger cannot corrupt.

Chapter 116 — Generosity and Miserliness

Allah promises success to those protected from their soul's miserliness. [Al-Hashr 59:9] Seek that protection and undertake its means. The Prophet warned that miserliness can lead to aggression and violation of sacred limits. [Sahih Muslim, 2578]

Attachment to wealth can consume relatives', employees' and partners' rights.

Sound generosity starts with obligations. Lavish hospitality cannot excuse withheld maintenance; public donations cannot excuse delayed wages. Examine whether visible giving is easy while unnoticed duties are resented, and whether personal luxuries are easier than a dependant's necessities.

Ibn al-Qayyim connects generosity with courage, because giving parts with something loved. [Madarij al-Salikin, station of character, discussion of the four foundations.] The struggle concerns the attachment overcome as well as the amount released. Justice remains alongside courage: no giving away another's property, no neglect of obligatory support. Paying an overdue debt may be today's truest generosity, though nobody applauds.

Protect the recipient's dignity. Do not make someone repeat a need publicly or recall a gift whenever conflict arises. Allah forbids nullifying charity through reminders and injury. [Al-Baqarah 2:264] A photograph or comment can rob someone of the

comfort assistance should bring. Choose a discreet means.

Generosity does not require financial destruction or voluntary giving financed through unsustainable debt. Recognise personal and family needs and actual ability. Limited income still permits service, knowledge, time or modest lawful giving. Amount alone establishes neither sincerity nor integrity of source and use.

Choose sustainable charity appropriate to your means. When reluctance comes, distinguish genuine need from exaggerated fear of loss. Settle overdue obligations first. Thank Allah, who supplied both the provision and the ability to give; His acceptance matters more than people's admiration.

Chapter 117 — Giving Preference and Taking It

Al-Bukhari relates how an Ansari hosted the Prophet's guest when the household had only the children's food. His wife prepared the meal, settled the children to sleep and extinguished the lamp; the

couple appeared to eat with the guest while going hungry themselves. The report accompanies the verse praising preference for others despite personal need. [Al-Hashr 59:9; Sahih al-Bukhari, 3798] They gave of their food and comfort while protecting the guest from embarrassment.

Selflessness gives another a share one desires and may lawfully relinquish. Giving surplus is good; yielding something wanted reveals another effort. Competition also concerns attention, rest, opportunities to learn, a prominent seat or credit in shared work.

Rights set limits. Entrusted funds, contracted working time and a child's rights are not ours to give away.

This account is no general permission to expose dependants to recurring hunger or harm. Read its generosity together with duties of maintenance and protection. A supposedly noble act cannot transfer its costs to someone who neither consents nor can resist.

Self-preference can survive outward giving: offering money while monopolising decisions, or allowing a choice only if others choose our preferred result. Admit that others have different lawful tastes and

needs. Yield what belongs to you without making it a favour repeatedly recalled.

Give preference once in a recurring small competition: rest at home, a colleague's opportunity to present work, or food you enjoy. Examine a desire to have the sacrifice noticed. Do not regard another's inability to repay as grounds for superiority.

Chapter 118 — Modesty, Intrusion and Disabling Embarrassment

The Prophet taught that modesty brings only good. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6117] It protects the tongue, gaze and hand from shameful conduct. Fear preventing a duty or legitimate claim is not its purpose.

Ibn al-Qayyim places modesty among the fruits of self-restraint, which keeps a person from ugly speech and action. [Madarij al-Salikin, station of character, four foundations.] It is more than discomfort before an audience. Does restraint remain when people are absent because Allah still sees us? At the same time, asking what corrects worship and dealings is good;

avoiding necessary learning does not become virtue through embarrassment.

Lying to avoid admitting a mistake protects an image, not religious modesty. Someone silent about abuse needs safety and support, not a sermon deepening that silence. Teach children how to refuse and report inappropriate behaviour, and reassure them that seeking protection is not wrongdoing.

Intrusiveness needs more than polite formulas. It can violate privacy, press embarrassing questions or comment upon an unchangeable appearance.

Curiosity grants no right to an answer, and silence does not authorise persistence.

Someone struggling to ask useful questions can write them, send them to a trusted person or practise a clear sentence in an easier setting. These are practical aids, not guaranteed treatments. Where persistent fear seriously disrupts study, work or life, seeking qualified assistance is a legitimate means, not a measure of deficient faith.

Ask what right needs protecting and which respectful words will do it: declining a private topic, requesting

explanation or asking for hurtful behaviour to stop. Modesty can preserve manners while courage protects the right.

Chapter 119 — Courage, Fear and Recklessness

Anas described the Prophet as the bravest of people, relating how he reached the source of a frightening sound in Madinah before others and returned reassuring them. [Sahih Muslim, 2307] The established account shows initiative and responsibility without invented dramatic detail.

Ibn al-Qayyim includes self-mastery in anger within courage. [Madarij al-Salikin, station of character, four foundations.] Restraining a devastating reply or admitting an image-threatening mistake can require unseen bravery. Retreat from error may be courageous; persistence may arise from fear of companions' criticism. Discern the purpose before naming an action strength.

Moral courage includes admitting a mistake requiring repayment, testifying fairly despite affection, refusing

a group's injustice and asking when confused. Each gives a rightful duty precedence over immediate ease. Recklessness acts before understanding consequences or beyond lawful authority and ability. Risk undertaken merely for a photograph is no useful bravery. Do not expose others and call their caution cowardice. In emergencies, recognising limitations, contacting specialists and moving people away from danger can be responsible action. Refraining from an intervention we cannot perform may demand more honesty than an impressive charge forward.

Name fear rather than shame yourself for it. Prepare an apology in writing or use appropriate channels for truthful testimony with due attention to safety. Fear can remain while a courageous action is performed.

Identify a duty delayed through embarrassment: a correction, an honest discussion with a creditor or a necessary boundary. Choose the time, words and route, and seek Allah's help. Remain firm without harshness and ready to hear a valid response.

Chapter 120 — Justice, Oppression and Favouritism

Allah forbids hatred from leading us away from justice, which is closer to piety. [Al-Ma'idah 5:8]
Affection tests us too. We may excuse in a relative what we reject in others, or dismiss a valid argument because its author differs from us elsewhere.

Begin with verification. Hearing one account should not turn the remainder of an enquiry into a search for conviction. Distinguish observation from inference, hear each party appropriately and, where possible, establish criteria before applying them. A rule should not change with a name.

Favouritism misuses what is not privately ours: allowing friends to jump a queue, sharing restricted information or making a team perform work for a relative. Kindness to relatives must come through lawful means and our own resources, not another person's rights.

Fairness at home also considers differing needs. Illness may require treatment, childhood special care.

Identical quantities are not the only form of justice, yet “different needs” must not become a permanent excuse for bias. Detailed questions about gifts, maintenance and rights require their proper religious rulings rather than feeling alone.

Would you accept your rule if the names were reversed? Have you withheld an opportunity to clarify? Can you explain the reason without judging intentions? These questions slow bias without guaranteeing infallibility. If an error appears, correct the decision; fear of looking inconsistent cannot justify leaving an injustice in place.

Chapter 121 — Faithfulness and Broken Promises

Allah commands fulfilment of covenants and warns that they will be questioned. [Al-Isra 17:34] The hadith includes breaking promises among traits of hypocrisy. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 33] Fear the trait and mend it, without judging the hidden faith of everyone who forgets or is delayed. Excuses and intentions differ; promises should remain serious.

Failure often begins with an unconsidered agreement. We want to please or appear capable, and someone else pays for our momentary comfort. Consider the cost, explain your capacity and distinguish an attempt from a commitment by a fixed date.

When an obstacle arises, tell the person before their interests suffer. Explain honestly, apologise for the effect and offer feasible repair. Notice does not erase negligence, but permits others to act. Disappearing and ignoring calls adds broken trust to unfinished work.

Promises concern contracts, debts, work and children. A child's age does not make a promise a mere device to quiet them. A promise to sin must not be fulfilled; explain the return honestly and honour any remaining lawful rights. Do not exploit ambiguity to evade a meaning the other person reasonably understood.

Review outstanding commitments. Complete what you can and contact those waiting. Fewer reliable promises are better than agreeable words that burden

everyone afterwards. Ask Allah for truthful speech and trustworthy responsibility.

Chapter 122 — Trust and Betrayal

Allah commands returning trusts to their owners. [Al-Nisa 4:58] These include property used for a specified purpose, work-related information, confidences and contracted services. Trust is most visible when betrayal could remain hidden.

Understand permission's boundaries. Borrowing a device does not permit examining its files. Access to organisational systems does not authorise private use of customer information. Knowing a password grants no unlimited entitlement. Technical capability and rightful permission are different; integrity should recognise the difference before fear of discovery intervenes.

Negligence still needs repair even without an intention to betray. Accepting custody or a task entails ordinary safeguards and honest explanation of competence. Asking for assistance is trustworthy where work exceeds ability. Concealing inability until

harm occurs gambles with others' rights. Good intentions alone cannot cover the damage.

Give the owner relevant information about use, progress and problems. Transparency means appropriate disclosure to those entitled, not broadcasting every secret. Nor should insistence alone persuade you to release a trust without verifying ownership or authorisation.

Examine a trust you currently hold. Does its owner know its true condition? Should you return it, improve protection or disclose a shortfall? Act promptly, seeking Allah's help and forgiveness while repairing neglect.

Chapter 123 — Good Opinion and Careful Verification

The Prophet warned against suspicion as the most false kind of speech. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6064] The Qur'an also warns against much suspicion and spying. [Al-Hujurat 49:12] An unanswered message need not mean contempt; an absent visit need not mean lost

affection; success need not imply dishonest advantage. An interpretation is not testimony.

Al-Sa'di explains how unsupported suspicion can lead to forbidden words and deeds, including spying and backbiting. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, 49:12.]

Notice the progression from thought to accusation, investigation of private faults and public report. Stop that progression. Appropriate precautions grounded in meaningful evidence differ from attributing evil without proof.

Thinking well does not prohibit documenting debts, limiting access or checking a prospective trustee's competence. You may treat someone respectfully while declining to entrust money where capability is unknown. Neither unfounded accusation nor unexamined confidence protects rights.

A passing, unintended possibility is not the same as deliberately building a case around it. What follows matters: selective evidence gathering, intrusion and insinuating questions, or acknowledging uncertainty and seeking lawful clarification where necessary.

Verification need not become humiliating interrogation. Ask about overdue agreed work without calling someone a liar first. A proven pattern of harm permits proportionate protection; good opinion does not erase established facts.

Separate what you observed, what you inferred and what remains unknown. If suspicion harmed someone, correct the accusation and apologise. Saying you were worried does not repair what was spread.

Chapter 124 — Privacy, Counsel and Public Exposure

The Prophet promised Allah's protection in this world and the next for one who conceals a Muslim's fault. [Sahih Muslim, 2699] Privacy can preserve the way back instead of turning a lapse into entertainment. Remembering Allah's concealment of our own faults should restrain needless pursuit of others'.

Counsel seeks the good of the person and those affected. Understand what occurred, explain the error and possible repair, and choose the fitting audience

and approach. A private word may suffice; a public right may require wider action. Neither secrecy nor publicity is invariably correct.

Al-Nawawi permits necessary disclosure for a sound religious purpose unattainable otherwise, discussing complaint, help in stopping wrong, seeking a ruling, warning and sincere counsel. [Riyad al-Salihin, chapter on permissible backbiting.] Concealment cannot silence a victim, and counsel cannot authorise unlimited exposure. Tell the capable authority what is needed without unrelated faults. Al-Nawawi also warns that envy may disguise itself as advice; examine motive as well as accuracy.

Where silence permits repeated assault, financial loss or danger to a child, seek someone able to protect and repair. Preserve evidence lawfully and safely and report the necessary facts. Public broadcasting or confronting an aggressor alone may not be required or wise.

Exposure becomes wrongful where it seeks humiliation or exceeds useful explanation. A valid criticism does not permit unrelated family secrets,

images or invitations to ridicule. Even a wrongdoer retains rights. Correct a disproved allegation despite the popularity of the original post.

Ask what harm you are preventing, who needs the information, what establishes it and whether less disclosure would suffice. Seek Allah's guidance and knowledgeable counsel in difficult cases. Do not let pleasure in scandal speak under the name of devotion to truth.

Chapter 125 — Responsible Transmission of News

Allah forbids following what we do not know. [Al-Isra 17:36] Responsibility belongs to the forwarder as well as the originator. A click may affect money, reputation or the peace of many homes.

Identify what you hold: an original text, shortened quotation, opinion or image separated from context. Who produced it, when, and with what evidence of attribution? Has the situation changed? An old true report can mislead when presented as current; exact words can mislead when their context is removed.

We readily believe what favours our attachments or embarrasses opponents. Increase care when the prospect gives quick pleasure. Apply the same evidence standard to welcome and unwelcome reports.

When something you published proves wrong, make correction reach its audience as far as possible. Removal may stop further spread but does not inform prior readers. Correct clearly without unnecessarily repeating injury, apologise to those harmed and do not shift all responsibility to the source.

Before forwarding, ask what you actually know well enough to take responsibility for. If there is no adequate answer, leave it. Missing the chance to be first is preferable to injuring someone through an unsupported report.

Chapter 126 — Tact Without Compromise

Aishah related that the Prophet warned those present about a man's poor conduct, then received him courteously. Asked about this, he explained the bad

standing of someone whom people avoid for fear of his harm. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6032] Necessary truthful warning coexisted with civil treatment, without abuse or endorsement of wrongdoing.

Tact chooses words and manners that prevent harm or encourage good while preserving truth.

Compromise becomes blameworthy when a duty is abandoned or falsehood decorated for approval or advantage. You may welcome someone respectfully and cooperate lawfully while refusing dishonest testimony or forbidden conduct.

Those who equate severity with sincerity may mistake courtesy towards a difficult person for hypocrisy. We need not announce every feeling to everyone. A smile neither cancels rights nor grants access to confidences. Restraint and boundaries can coexist.

Conversely, silence about forgery or exploitation must not simply be renamed tact because objection is costly. Ask what duty was left, who suffered and what lawful means of correction remain. Capacity and

circumstances differ; renaming an action does not change its reality.

Refuse briefly and honestly, explaining a lawful alternative where available. Add no insult or promise you do not intend to keep. Gentle wording can make a firm boundary easier to hear.

Chapter 127 — Overlooking and Neglect

In an account from the Prophet's household, Allah says: ﴿عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ﴾ — meaning: He made some of it known and overlooked some. [Al-Tahrim 66:3] We may reflect that reproach need not exhaust every detail where sufficient explanation already serves its purpose.

Commendable overlooking consciously leaves a minor lapse whose exposure is unnecessary for a duty: an unintended slip of speech, a small omission already repaired or an unhelpful detail. Announcing that you noticed but graciously overlooked may revive the very embarrassment you intended to spare.

Neglect leaves necessary protection undone. Danger to a child, recurring workplace harm or errors

affecting people's money require attention. Asking questions is not automatically fault-finding, nor silence automatically patience. Distinguish avoidance of discomfort from a genuine benefit in not pursuing detail.

Family life becomes cramped if every imperfection produces a trial. Agree on essentials and allow differing habits and tastes. Discuss recurring hurt calmly rather than storing it for a later explosion. Overlooking should not become a hidden archive of ammunition.

Leave one harmless minor lapse without announcing a favour. Address one neglected responsibility you have called overlooking. Gentleness can remain attentive to duties and rights.

Chapter 128 — Humour Within Kind Limits

When the Companions observed that the Prophet joked with them, he affirmed that he spoke only truth. [Jami al-Tirmidhi, 1990; al-Tirmidhi: hasan

sahih.] Enjoyment needs neither fabricated news nor mockery or betrayed confidences.

Consider the listener, timing and what is welcome. A target may remain silent for fear of being called humourless. The room's laughter proves no consent. If someone says they are hurt, stop and apologise instead of making their objection the next joke.

Power differences require greater care. An employee or child may struggle to object. Authority must not normalise humiliation. Frightening someone, interfering with property or accounts, or publishing an embarrassing photograph without permission is not excused by calling it a joke.

Serious moments also have rights. Humour may evade a confession of pain or request for apology. Listen before trying to lighten things. Work, prayer and trusts must not be displaced by amusement.

Notice what makes you laugh: a lawful incongruity or someone's humiliation? Build warmth through truthful words and shared enjoyment instead of targeting the least powerful person. Forgoing a harmful joke is a small, meaningful act of restraint.

Chapter 129 — Knowing When to Speak

The Prophet instructs whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day to speak good or remain silent. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6018] Goodness is the measure, not silence itself. Teaching, testimony, greeting, prayer, apology and comforting grief can all require speech.

Ibn Rajab connects faith with responsibility for words in explaining this hadith. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, hadith 15.] Eloquence and entertainment do not suffice. Ask about truth, entitlement to speak and benefit or injury. A plainer, fairer sentence may be better: describe conduct without judging motives, distinguish witnessing from hearsay and stop where knowledge stops.

True words may be unnecessary in a particular gathering. Comfortable silence may abandon someone needing our testimony. Discern the purpose and stop when it has been fulfilled.

Interrupting can turn every gathering towards ourselves. Someone shares an experience and we prepare a more impressive one; someone asks a question and we answer before understanding it.

Listening gives another person the right to be understood.

Written words need the same care. An angry message persists and travels without a later apologetic tone. Delay it, reread in light of the actual claim, remove accusations of intention and leave room for missing explanation.

Listen to the end next time, briefly restate your understanding, then answer. Leave a clever comment that adds no good. Repeated small choices change what it is like to be in our company.

Chapter 130 — Backbiting, Tale-Bearing and Contention

The Prophet defined backbiting as mentioning a brother in a way he dislikes; if the fault is real, it is backbiting, and if untrue, slander. [Sahih Muslim, 2589] “I did not lie” is no sufficient defence. Gesture, imitation and images can carry the same harm as explicit speech.

Tale-bearing conveys words to corrupt relationships and receives a severe warning. [Sahih Muslim, 105]

Fear that warning and repent without pronouncing an individual's final fate. Do not invite more details or treat one person's report as the whole story. Decline destructive gossip while leaving a proper route for genuine grievances.

Allah prohibits mockery, insults and offensive nicknames. [Al-Hujurat 49:11] Stop an unwanted nickname even if familiar. Origins, accents and poverty are no rightful sources of ridicule. Habit does not dissolve injury.

Obscenity encourages further violation; contentiousness turns discussion into endless competition. When evidence and disagreement are clear and only repetition and rising voices remain, turn to something useful. Leaving a quarrel need not mean lacking an argument. We do not always need the final word.

After harm, stop, regret and resolve to change, then repair the effect appropriately. Correct a false public accusation and address private claims. How to seek release for backbiting unknown to its subject requires scholarly guidance where disclosure might create

greater injury. General good deeds must not become an excuse to postpone a repair already within reach.

Book Ten — Striving to Cultivate Good Character

Opening Reflection

Once we recognise character's worth and a fault within ourselves, a practical question follows: How can I change? Earlier attempts may have ended in familiar habits. Yet command, prohibition, supplication and repentance invite another sincere effort. We cannot guarantee divine enabling, but we can seek Allah's help, take a means, repair a lapse and repeat a good action.

The Prophet said, in meaning: Be eager for what benefits you, seek Allah's help, and do not give up. [Sahih Muslim, 2664] Resolve and dependence belong together. Neither leave the means while praying nor trust personal ability so completely that Allah is forgotten. We need both in every fresh attempt.

Chapter 131 — What Can Be Learned

The Prophet promises Allah's help in patience to those who strive to practise it. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1469] A person can hold back the tongue while finding restraint difficult, repeating it for Allah's sake until the unfamiliar action becomes easier.

Al-Ghazali explains that training refines and directs natural powers instead of erasing them, while recognising differing capacities and entrenched habits. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of changing character through discipline.] Outward conduct may improve before inward resistance subsides. That delay does not excuse harming others: stop the wrong now while patiently training the self towards greater ease.

One person may give readily and anger quickly; another may be patient but strongly attached to wealth. Differences identify where effort is needed without cancelling responsibility. Do not compare someone's beginning with another's long-practised ability, or assume needing more training means not wanting goodness.

Choose observable conduct. A broad hope for good character can become listening without interruption, delaying an agitated reply or returning a borrowed item on time. Identify the setting and review the effect. An overwhelming schedule for every area of life may soon collapse.

Learning does not promise infallibility or completion within a fixed number of days. Speech may improve while motives still need work; work conduct may improve before family conduct. Let the difference indicate the next step. Thank Allah for progress, repent of shortcomings and award yourself no permanent certificate.

Chapter 132 — Seeing a Fault Without Despising Yourself

Allah says that a person is a witness against himself, even while presenting excuses. [Al-Qiyamah 75:14–15] Pressure or another's disregard may need addressing, but cannot change the reality of our insult or neglected right.

Al-Ghazali discusses learning one's faults through insightful guidance, a truthful friend, what an opponent's criticism reveals, and noticing in ourselves faults we recognise elsewhere. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of how a person learns his faults.] This does not require surrender to every critic. Distinguish specific counsel from humiliation, evidence from accusation and knowledge from control. We need not solicit abuse or accept unqualified diagnoses. We do need an honest route for correction rather than a circle that says only what pleases us.

Useful examination names a repairable action: late fulfilment, ridicule of a question or withholding relevant information. Declaring yourself wholly evil restores no right and ignores the open door of repentance. Regret wrongdoing seriously while hoping in Allah and accepting the next possible responsibility.

Ask someone who knows you in ordinary life for a clear example. Hear it before defending yourself. Accept what is true and clarify what is mistaken

without treating every criticism as either complete truth or complete hostility.

Spend a few minutes at day's end on a good action for which to thank Allah, a fault requiring repentance or repair, and its recurring cause. Choose tomorrow's action. Once the duty is clear, repeated mental trials may no longer serve it. Seek competent help if scrutiny becomes disabling anxiety.

Chapter 133 — Intention and Need of Allah

Before the plan comes its purpose: for whose sake do I want better character? People's approval can be a welcome result, but their changing wishes and imperfect gratitude cannot carry the heart's whole purpose. Seeking Allah's pleasure preserves meaning when thanks are absent.

Ibn Hazm's counsel not to make advice conditional on acceptance helps us examine other good deeds too. [Al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar, section on friendship and counsel.] Sincerity may need renewal when thanks fail or disagreement appears. Enjoying praise does not

automatically prove ostentation, nor does feeling hurt automatically spoil an action. Examine what the feeling leads to: reminders, withheld rights or regret that nobody noticed. Correct motives without prosecuting every feeling.

Renew intention before a difficult meeting, an unseen service and a success that invites self-admiration. Ask Allah for help with His rights and people's rights. The capacity to refrain and give is itself a blessing.

The Prophet prayed for Allah to grant his soul piety and purify it, acknowledging Him as its Guardian and Master. [Sahih Muslim, 2722] Let this prayer affect conduct: leave a corrupting cause, seek guiding knowledge and choose helpful company.

If you notice kindness reserved for the useful and harshness for those whose criticism carries little cost, reform the intention as well as the appearance.

Deliberately honour someone from whom you expect nothing. Receive thanks courteously, praise Allah and make no gratitude condition for continued goodness.

Chapter 134 — Guide Me to the Finest Character

Among the Prophet's opening supplications in prayer was the request for guidance to the finest character and removal of its evil, which only Allah can grant. [Sahih Muslim, 771] This prayer gives the book its title. We need guidance to recognise virtue, practise it and remain steady in it.

Knowledge does not make enabling unnecessary. We may know gentleness and fail at anger, know truthfulness and falter before loss. Seek guidance that brings acceptance, willing action and perseverance, and practise what is already known.

The finest character calls beyond leaving gross misconduct. After abandoning insults, seek attentive listening, honest apology, initiative in kindness and fairness where favouritism is possible. Do not find reassurance only by comparing yourself with someone worse. Look to prophetic guidance to understand how much remains to learn.

Ask also for removal of what corrupts. Bring a known fault to mind without restricting the prayer's meaning to it: habitual backbiting, domestic anger or careless promises. Seek help to leave its causes and repair its effects. Reflect upon the transmitted supplication, and use other sound personal prayers without attributing them to the Sunnah.

Attach no timetable to an answer that revelation does not specify, and do not replace repentance with repeated words. Pray, hope and act. A lapse does not make a sincere prayer false where the person continues honestly seeking and returning. Our need remains, and Allah's mercy is vast.

Chapter 135 — A Prayer for the Inward Person

Aishah reported that the Messenger prayed, in meaning: O Allah, You have made my outward form good, so make my character good. [Musnad Ahmad, 24392, 40:456, through Isra'il, Asim ibn Sulayman and Abd Allah ibn al-Harith from Aishah; Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut graded it authentic.]

The distinction between khalq, created form, and khuluq, character, returns care for appearance to care for intention and conduct. We may dress carefully for a meeting while preparing to quarrel. This prayer reminds us that the tongue, heart and hand also need preparation.

No occasion, number or result should be attached without established evidence. We do not prescribe it specifically for a mirror. Nor should the prayer turn into judgement of bodily worth by social standards of beauty. Character's goodness is open to people of differing appearances and circumstances.

Prepare for an important meeting through both suitable cleanliness and dress, and honesty, fairness and listening. Before returning home, ask for conduct that reassures your family. O Allah, help us thank You for countless blessings and mend our hearts, words and deeds.

Chapter 136 — Repentance, Restitution and Apology

The Prophet urged anyone owing another a wrong concerning honour or anything else to seek release from it today. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2449] Repentance includes regret, stopping, resolve and lawful restoration or release from claims, before worldly means of compensation are gone.

Return money to its owner. Correct a false report as far as possible among those who received it. Stop verbal or physical injury and seek repair. Difficult cases require scholarly guidance rather than an invented action assumed to discharge every obligation.

A sincere apology names the deed, recognises the harm as far as understood and explains repair. It does not first interrogate the victim or end by blaming sensitivity. A separate wrong by the other person may need discussion, but mixing it into the apology easily becomes disguised defence.

Trust may take time to return. We cannot demand immediate forgetting to reassure ourselves that we repented. Remain truthful, respect reasonable protections and pray for the injured. Where direct contact is impossible or harmful, seek an appropriate, trustworthy alternative. Repentance's honour lies in sincerity, not in securing quick absolution from people.

Chapter 137 — Watchfulness Before and After

Allah says that no word is uttered without an attentive recorder. [Qaf 50:18] Remembering His knowledge and the recording of speech helps create a pause before words. Prepare for known difficult encounters before a quarrel intensifies.

Identify a lawful purpose and a boundary. In a financial discussion, seek clarity about the right and repayment without insults, threats or lies. During discussion, notice when the matter has become an attack on the person. Return to the issue or pause responsibly until an appropriate time.

Afterwards, examine without embellishment or prolonged rumination. What helped gentleness? When did the voice change? What right remains? Was the meaning understood? Choose one repair: a clarification, apology or missing fact. Partial success does not erase a mistake; a mistake need not become an endless trial of the self.

Distinguish intention from effect. Unintended hurt may still require changed words and apology. Another's hostile intention does not authorise injustice in return. Awareness of Allah keeps the actual duty before us.

Chapter 138 — Slowing the Angry Response

Seeing a man intensely angry, the Prophet identified seeking refuge in Allah from Satan as words that would dispel what he felt. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6115]
Seek that refuge and take means to prevent aggression. Hands and tongue must be restrained before every feeling has disappeared.

Practical measures may include a brief silence, putting down an object that could be misused, or moving to safety. These are behavioural measures, not individually prescribed acts with special promised merit. Where someone awaits an urgent right, explain the pause and return as promised rather than evade responsibility.

Prepare a sentence in advance expressing the wish to speak without injury and resume when calmer. Where immediate danger exists, protection and assistance take priority over continuing a moral discussion.

Afterwards address the recurring cause. A pause alone is insufficient if identical harm continues.

Responsibilities may need fairer distribution, avoidable exhaustion may need reduction, or communication skills and qualified support may be necessary. Do not make the injured person responsible for controlling your behaviour; each person's duty to refrain from aggression remains independent.

Chapter 139 — Giving the Tongue Better Alternatives

Leaving a hurtful phrase may require learning another that serves its legitimate purpose. Instead of telling a child they understand nothing, review the unclear instructions. Instead of labelling a colleague careless, describe overdue work and ask what is preventing completion. The problem remains visible, but its language helps resolution.

Practise asking rather than assuming intention, describing an action rather than a personality, and making a specific request rather than offering unlimited blame. Questions about proposals and achievable timing permit answers. “You are always like this” makes a judgement about past and future and encourages defence.

Let calm words carry sincere respect, not concealed contempt through tone or gestures. Hear the answer and accept evidence that your understanding was incomplete. If unable to listen now, request a reasonable short delay instead of pretending attention while preparing a reply.

Each evening, rewrite one regretted sentence in your ordinary words and use the alternative when appropriate. This develops flexible truthful and gentle speech, rather than a rigid script. Look for greater safety in asking and explaining, not merely admiration of your own phrasing.

Chapter 140 — Practising Until Goodness Becomes Familiar

The Prophet taught that the deeds most beloved to Allah are the most consistent, even if small. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6464] Greeting, asking before judging, fulfilling promises and reviewing obligations gain a lasting place through repetition, not enthusiasm alone.

Al-Ghazali describes how repeated actions strengthen dispositions, while dispositions in turn encourage actions. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of how good character is attained.] Choose a small lawful action where you struggle. Do not invent hardship for its own sake or violate rights under the name of breaking the ego. Miserliness is

opposed first through duties, then feasible giving; irritability through listening and measured replies. Days and records are organisational aids, not revealed guarantees of change by a deadline.

Difficulty at the beginning is not hypocrisy. A person can restrain speech while hurt, or pay a right without yet enjoying generosity, sincerely seeking inward agreement with outward obedience. What is blameworthy is using a good appearance to conceal persistent wrongdoing or obtain something unlawful.

Tie a modest action to a recurring moment: read a disputed message completely before replying, return a loaned item when finished, greet and attend to family on entering home. These links are adaptable reminders, not specially prescribed Sunnahs.

Counting must not replace meaning. Ten recorded instances of listening do not excuse interrupting someone at the most important moment. Observe consequences and invite specific feedback without demanding praise. Preserve an established practice before adding another. Gradual training never

postpones leaving a present prohibition or returning an immediately due right.

Chapter 141 — Company, Surroundings and Example

Allah commands patient companionship with those calling upon their Lord morning and evening seeking His pleasure. [Al-Kahf 18:28] Company familiar with truth, remembrance and respect helps us practise them. Other surroundings can normalise ridicule, gossip and competition in appearances.

Al-Ghazali includes requesting correction from a truthful, perceptive friend among the ways to recognise faults. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul.] Helpful company neither flatters constantly nor claims a right to control you. You might agree on a private reminder about interruption or forgotten promises without turning friendship into continual inspection. Thank the adviser for truth and discuss mistakes respectfully; advice grants no infallibility.

Choose company without despising people or cancelling kinship duties. You may maintain a

relative's rights while reducing participation in harmful gatherings, changing the subject or leaving courteously. Where work surroundings cannot be transformed, control your contribution, seek good company elsewhere and offer fair words yourself.

Choose examples through continuing conduct rather than eloquence alone: honest correction, protection of the weak and fulfilled trusts. No one after the Prophet is infallible. Accept goodness and leave error without deciding a virtue meaningless because someone admired failed to live it once.

Review your daily media company too. Reduce recurring sources of contempt, gossip and rage. Replace some of the time with beneficial reading, companionship or service so that an empty space does not quickly invite the old habit back.

Chapter 142 — Worship and the Treatment of the Heart

Prayer restrains indecency and wrongdoing. [Al-Ankabut 29:45] When worship and persistent injustice conflict in our lives, improve the worship

and repent of the injustice rather than abandon worship.

Prostration reminds us of servitude, incompatible with superiority towards those poorer or less prominent. Zakah and charity address attachment to wealth; fasting trains commanded restraint. These remain acts of worship offered in obedience and hope of reward, with better character among their fruits, rather than mere behavioural exercises.

Optional devotion cannot excuse neglected family or contracted duties. Priorities require knowledge; what we enjoy choosing is not necessarily more urgent than what binds us. Sincere worship should strengthen faithfulness.

After a prayer, fulfil a known right or leave harmful speech. Seek guidance at the point of need. If results are not immediate, examine attention, knowledge and action without impatience or complacency. We need Allah's mercy in worship and its fruits alike.

Chapter 143 — Fasting and Impulse

The Prophet warned against fasting while continuing false speech and action. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1903] A lapse calls for repentance and proper completion of the fast, not abandonment of it. Hunger excuses neither deceit nor aggression.

Fasting teaches that desire need not be followed immediately: something ordinarily lawful is left for a specified time in obedience to Allah. Reflect upon other impulses needing restraint, such as answering sharply, unnecessary looking or seeking victory. This is a moral reflection upon obedience, not a licence to derive legal analogies without knowledge.

The hunger considered here belongs to lawful fasting by those able, not punitive starvation or an invented deprivation programme. Bodily harm is no proof of sincerity. Where health or exemption is involved, consult qualified religious scholarship about the ruling and a clinician about medical safety and treatment.

Prepare for a situation in which speech often slips while fasting. Let attention continue after breaking

the fast. If voluntary fasting is unsuitable, other avenues remain: restraint, honesty, service and prayer. An act not required in your circumstances need not narrow the whole path of reform.

Chapter 144 — Giving as a Practice

Charity reveals attachment and fear. We may hesitate over a gift more than an unnecessary personal expense. Move beyond self-reproach: assess obligations and means, then choose lawful giving within capacity.

Attend first to due zakah, debts and required maintenance. Voluntary giving may then be modest and regular, meet a relative's need or serve a particular purpose. It need not be large or publicly measured.

Do not make help conditional on agreement with every opinion. Protect the recipient's privacy and ask only what proper distribution requires. Verification should preserve dignity, especially when distributing money entrusted by others.

Afterwards, notice any demand for gratitude and return to seeking acceptance. Allah needs none of our deeds; obedience benefits us. Where money is limited, offer time or service, without claiming these cancel an established financial obligation.

Chapter 145 — Service Without Self-Preference

Aishah described the Prophet serving his family before going out for prayer. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 676] Quiet household work is not beneath an honoured person.

Ask what help is actually needed. Choosing only an easy task may leave the heavier burden untouched. Learn the task's beginning and completion so that half its work does not return to the person you meant to assist.

Service grants no authority over others' choices and no permission to reveal secrets learned while helping. Do not overburden yourself and then use fatigue to justify insulting those served. Organise, share work and take lawful rest.

Accept a recurring task you can reliably complete without repeated reminders or announcements. Notice the heart when nobody sees the burden removed. Seek reward from Allah and let those around you experience genuinely shared responsibility.

Chapter 146 — Receiving Criticism and Correcting Error

Advice can hurt most where we take pride. Give yourself enough space to hear before defending. You need not agree with every criticism; examine it fairly, appreciate what helps and answer inaccuracies respectfully with evidence.

Al-Ghazali notes that even an opponent can reveal a fault. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul.] This does not authenticate every hostile accusation. Identify verifiable incidents, words or delayed rights and correct them despite the critic's manner. Reject additions that are false. Harshness does not invalidate all content, and partial accuracy does not justify all insult.

Separate the comment, its delivery and the motive you may not know. You may explain that the delivery hurt while correcting the substance. Neither consideration cancels the other.

Let correction reach the place of error. Retract a disproved public opinion before its audience; amend a harmful decision in records and practice. Private regret unknown to the injured is insufficient. Honest admission needs no cruel self-description.

Ask a trustworthy person for an example of one behaviour, rather than a global judgement. Record and revisit it later. The adviser helps but is not responsible for constant monitoring. A good outcome is increased confidence that truth can be spoken without a quarrel.

Chapter 147 — Returning After a Setback

Allah calls those who have wronged themselves not to despair of His mercy. [Al-Zumar 39:53] Hope invites repentance now. A renewed lapse after better days

requires repair, without erasing earlier good or excusing present harm.

“I will never change” claims more than we know and closes an available action. Ask what preceded the lapse: exhaustion, missing preparation, abandonment of a helpful practice or need for wider assistance. Seek a changeable cause rather than an excuse.

Repair the immediate injury before redesigning everything. Apologise, restore the right and stop further spread. Resume a manageable practice and reduce optional burdens beyond capacity. Duties remain; seek lawful assistance in meeting them.

Do not compare a difficult day with an imagined perfect life of others. Measure conduct against guidance, thank Allah for each return and refuse to make failure your permanent identity.

Chapter 148 — Feelings and Conduct

At Ibrahim's death, the Prophet wept and grieved while affirming that he would say only what pleased his Lord. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 1303] Patience does not require denying pain.

Al-Ghazali distinguishes refining anger from eradicating it. [Ihya Ulum al-Din, Book of Training the Soul, discussion of changing character.] Intense grief, fear or anger may require appropriate assistance. Not every distress is an accusation against faith or morals. Attend to possible actions: seeking help, reducing harm and safeguarding rights. Moral instruction does not replace specialist care, and the need for care does not remove available protective responsibilities.

Restraint should not prevent the wronged from explaining pain, seeking a right or requesting time and support. The work is to prevent emotion becoming aggression or unsupported accusation.

Let family members name feelings without ridicule while preserving behavioural limits. Hearing a child's fear or a spouse's distress opens understanding. It does not prove every interpretation or require granting every resulting request.

Where distress persists or disrupts life, trusted or qualified help may assist. Continuing injury requires prevention, not merely instructions to swallow anger.

Both the injured and the person causing harm have rights and duties.

Chapter 149 — Seeking Qualified Help

Asking for help is no verdict of weak faith. Someone may know harm must stop yet need skills or treatment for a contributing difficulty. Religious questions belong to qualified scholars; clinical questions to qualified professionals in their fields.

Recurring harmful anger, violence or unsuccessful self-help can justify consultation with a clinician or mental health professional. Where danger to anyone is immediate, seek local emergency assistance and move to safety if possible. Protection takes precedence over a lesson or exercise.

In family conflict, choose a qualified trustworthy adviser where possible. Where threats or abuse exist, safety assessment comes first. Bringing both parties into a joint conversation is not automatically suitable. Relatives should not pressure the injured to disclose unsafely or remain under continuing harm in the name of forgiveness.

Treatment does not remove responsibility for aggression, and mental illness does not mean someone is aggressive. Avoid casual diagnostic labels, describe actual conduct, preserve privacy and support appropriate professional care without independently changing prescribed treatment.

Chapter 150 — Forty Days of Practice

Forty days is a suggested period for organising and reviewing effort. No special religious merit is assigned to this number for character formation, and no promise is made that every fault will disappear or a habit become complete. Extend or repeat exercises as needed. Obligations and rights take priority. A missed day requires neither expiation nor a religious restart of the count; resume without turning a lapse into abandonment.

Choose one central quality, such as gentleness, truthfulness or faithfulness, and keep it in view throughout. Other exercises broaden attention to its supports. Begin each day with an appropriate transmitted supplication, without an imposed repetition count, and identify the day's action. End

with a brief note about what happened and what needs repair. Protect other people's secrets. The record observes conduct; it does not grade your faith.

Days 1–7: Preparing to Begin

Day 1: Name One Quality

Choose a specific behaviour, such as interrupting, rather than resolving to become perfect. Recall two situations where it occurs and ask Allah for guidance. In the evening record observations without passing judgement on your whole self.

Day 2: Hear a Trustworthy Witness

Ask someone trustworthy for one example of the behaviour. Explain that you want to understand and listen to the end. Do not demand an inventory of faults or constant surveillance. Record what is sound and what needs clarification, and thank them.

Day 3: Notice What Comes Before

Observe haste, tiredness, feeling misunderstood or a repeatedly provocative setting. Adjust one manageable

condition, perhaps postponing a non-urgent discussion. Review the effect while remembering that an unchanged trigger still permits no aggression.

Day 4: Pray with Attention

Read chapter 134 and reflect on the prayer for the finest character. Ask for one virtue and deliverance from one fault, then take a fitting action. Do not make the action a test of whether the prayer was answered. In both prayer and obedience you worship Allah and hope for His favour.

Day 5: Review What You Owe

List known delayed rights: money, borrowed property, a promise or correction. Fulfil one today. Where time is needed, speak honestly and agree on what is feasible. A list does not replace payment, and a knowingly impossible date is no repair.

Day 6: Quiet Goodness

Offer a modest private deed while protecting anyone involved. Notice the wish to be known and return to

acceptance from Allah. If the deed becomes known without your intention, do not deny it artificially; thank Allah and continue.

Day 7: First Review

Identify one improvement and one remaining difficulty from the previous days. Note a possible cause and next week's action. Avoid verdicts of total success or failure. Thank Allah, seek forgiveness and fulfil an outstanding right.

Days 8–14: Speech and Truthfulness

Day 8: Leave One Interruption

Listen until the speaker's meaning is clear rather than preparing a reply throughout. Ask about uncertainty. If you interrupt, stop and allow completion. Notice whether your first answer would have rested on an assumption.

Day 9: Correct an Inaccuracy

Correct an exaggeration or unsupported certainty in its original setting. Use honest expressions of

uncertainty where appropriate. Compare the embarrassment feared with the burden of continuing words you cannot stand behind.

Day 10: Stop Contributing to Backbiting

Do not add to an unnecessary discussion of an absent person's fault. Change the subject, object gently or leave appropriately. Avoid introducing more harmful detail in defence. Review smiles or gestures as well as speech, and repair what you can.

Day 11: Promise Honestly

Consider time and capacity before agreeing. Decline clearly or request time to think. Review an older promise too. Fewer new promises must not become escape from an existing commitment.

Day 12: Correct Without Attacking

State a needed observation through the incident and request, leaving personality judgements and absolute accusations. Choose a fitting time, listen and accept

valid correction. Review how this differs from beginning with blame.

Day 13: Verify Before Forwarding

Check origin, date and context of something genuinely worth sharing; otherwise leave it. Do not spread an accusation by asking others whether it is true. If you already circulated an error, send a clear correction to its audience.

Day 14: Second Review

Has unsupported certainty decreased? Are apologies and refusals clearer? Keep a useful alternative phrase. Also examine silence: did you withhold a necessary truthful word? Address that wisely.

Days 15–28: Gentleness, Rights and Giving

Day 15: Gentleness at Home

Ask about a practical burden you can ease and complete the task without hurtful instructions or demands for thanks. Learn what you do not know.

Consider whether the manner of offering help matched its usefulness.

Day 16: A Pause in Anger

Prepare respectful words for a pause and seek refuge in Allah when angry. Return at the agreed appropriate time instead of using silence as punishment. Do not manufacture a quarrel for practice; review an earlier one if none occurs.

Day 17: Honour a Worker

Greet, thank, explain clearly and fulfil the worker's rights. Gratitude cannot cover unfair pay or demands. Compare your manners with those used before someone influential, and ask Allah to correct the difference.

Day 18: Give Without Reminders

Give within your means after obligations, preserving privacy and dignity. If money is unavailable, offer a lawful service or prayer. Renew intention when

praise becomes attractive. Do not neglect due maintenance or debt through enthusiasm.

Day 19: Be Fair to a Different View

Understand a calmly discussable view from its holder's own words. Acknowledge anything correct and explain remaining disagreement respectfully. There is no need to start a new dispute merely to practise.

Day 20: Make a Specific Apology

Return to a known injury, acknowledge it without redirecting blame and begin repair. Require neither immediate pardon nor a certificate of change. If direct contact is unsafe, seek a trustworthy alternative preserving rights and safety.

Day 21: Midway Review

Has the central quality improved across relationships or only before selected people? Choose a weak setting and a practical response. Reduce an excessive optional

exercise if needed while preserving duties. Seek steadfastness without self-admiration.

Day 22: Restore a Trust

Review property, information, confidences and permissions. Return what is no longer needed, correct use beyond permission and provide necessary notice. Do not retain an unauthorised private copy of a file. Identify the concrete act of integrity.

Day 23: Overlook Deliberately

Leave a harmless minor lapse unannounced, while attending to a responsibility you have been avoiding. Explain to yourself why overlooking helped in one case and attention was required in the other.

Day 24: Maintain a Fitting Family Tie

Visit, call, serve or enquire according to the relationship and circumstances. Do not begin with reproach for not being contacted first or intrude upon privacy. Where harm exists, choose a safe form

and seek scholarly guidance about difficult rights and limits.

Day 25: Yield Something Lawful

Relinquish a preference you own without sacrificing dependants' or entrusted rights. Do not recall the concession in the next quarrel. Notice whether you can welcome the other's joy and seek help against self-preference without self-cruelty.

Day 26: Protect Privacy

Before sharing another's image, message or story, establish necessity, your right and permission where required. Closeness is no blanket consent. If you crossed a boundary, stop further spread where possible and repair appropriately.

Day 27: Useful Advice

Where advice is genuinely needed, verify the incident and choose suitable words and means. Address one action and possible repair, not a collection of faults.

Do not invent an occasion; accepting previously resisted sound advice may be today's work.

Day 28: Fourth Review

Which rights have improved and which remain? Has giving produced unnoticed reminders of favour? Keep one useful action and complete one outstanding claim. A pleasing overall impression must not conceal a specific unrepaired incident.

Days 29–40: Carrying Character into Life

Day 29: A Fair Decision

Clarify the rule and hear necessary facts before deciding. Would it remain if the beneficiary were a relative or opponent? If no decision arises, review an earlier one and correct established error without protecting your image at another's expense.

Day 30: Worship Followed by a Right

Attend carefully to a daily prayer and your need for guidance, then fulfil a nearby right. This link is a practical reminder, not a specially prescribed rite or

reward. Examine whether optional devotion has delayed something obligatory.

Day 31: Integrity in Work

Complete a task or agreed service without hiding a consequential shortfall. Seek help early and credit others fairly. Report truthfully what is finished, what remains and what requires a decision.

Day 32: Humour Without Injury

Bring warmth through truthful, lawful words. Leave disliked names and comments on appearance or secrets. If someone is hurt, stop and apologise without calling them oversensitive. Notice whether customary amusement depends on someone unable to object.

Day 33: Leave Contention

End repeated argument respectfully once the disagreement is clear. Do not send a final message merely to prove answering power. Where a right

needs resolution, use its proper route: documentation, mediation or scholarly enquiry.

Day 34: Seek Appropriate Help

Identify whether a recurring problem needs knowledge, organisation, skill or qualified assistance, and ask specifically while protecting privacy. Never delay urgent help until this scheduled day; danger and rights do not wait for a programme.

Day 35: Review Your Surroundings

Reduce one recurring source of gossip, agitation or harmful comparison. Replace some time with beneficial company, reading or service. Preserve necessary ties and avoid contempt. Observe the effect upon your chosen behaviour.

Day 36: Goodness Without Thanks

Fulfil an ordinary duty or chosen service without demanding special recognition. Do not invite exploitation or cancel your own rights. If absent

appreciation hurts, acknowledge it, renew intention and express legitimate needs respectfully.

Day 37: Revisit a Setback

Complete any repair left after a lapse. Identify one cause and a feasible preventive step. Do not punish yourself through harmful deprivation or erase the whole beginning. Today's honest return belongs to the journey.

Day 38: Feedback from Someone Close

Ask the trusted person consulted earlier for a specific observed change and a remaining concern. Do not steer towards praise or argue immediately. Compare with your record, accept what is true and thank them. The responsibility remains yours with Allah's help.

Day 39: Choose What Continues

Keep one or two manageable practices, such as weekly review of obligations, a pause before angry replies or regular service. Identify their place in life and how to resume after difficulty. Leave room to

grow without loading tomorrow with every hoped-for reform.

Day 40: Gratitude and Renewed Action

Read your beginning, thank Allah for His help, seek forgiveness and complete outstanding rights. Record the next honest step without declaring the struggle finished. End with the transmitted prayer for the finest character and deliverance from its evil, then continue the action you chose to preserve.

Book Eleven — Character Throughout Life

Opening Reflection

Those who know us daily see how we promise, become angry, apologise and act when kindness goes unthanked. Different relationships carry different rights: parents, spouses, neighbours, workers and creditors are not identical claims. Worship, justice, mercy and faithfulness unite them.

Keep a firm foundation while understanding the particular situation. Kindness to a stranger does not cancel a relative's right; voluntary charity does not repay debt; a victim cannot bear the entire burden of repairing a relationship. Begin with what you owe and seek Allah's help to give and claim rights with good character.

Chapter 151 — Parents and Relatives

Allah forbids even an expression of irritation towards parents, commands noble speech and teaches the

prayer for mercy upon them as they raised us when small. [Al-Isra 17:23–24] Honour goes beyond avoiding insult to asking, listening, considering age and weakness, and praying.

Asma bint Abi Bakr asked about maintaining her mother's ties while her mother was a polytheist; the Prophet told her to maintain them. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2620] A mother's rights remain across religious difference, while obedience in sin remains forbidden. The Qur'an joins refusal of a command to associate partners with Allah to good companionship in worldly life. [Luqman 31:15]

Understand the actual need instead of offering only what you prefer. A parent may need company at an appointment, patient explanation or an uninterrupted call. Siblings should share care fairly rather than trade blame. Those unable to help in one way can help in another; proximity must not make one person responsible for everything.

Kinship is not a ledger of equal favours. Begin available kindness while preventing serious continuing harm. Safe boundaries, trustworthy

mediation and scholarly advice can help reconcile complicated duties. Dutifulness cannot authorise abuse or compel wrongdoing.

Meet one family need at a suitable time. Where a request exceeds ability, decline honestly and kindly, offering a feasible alternative. Courtesy in refusal can reveal more than warmth when agreeing to something already welcome.

Chapter 152 — Between Spouses

Allah commands honourable marital companionship. [Al-Nisa 4:19] The Prophet taught that a believing man should not hate a believing woman: if one quality displeases him, another pleases him. [Sahih Muslim, Book of Suckling, chapter advising kindness towards women; commonly numbered 1469, displayed electronically as 1468b.] One fault should not erase all goodness or a moment's anger erase years together. Both spouses need fairness and knowledge of their respective rights.

Al-Nawawi explains the warning against hatred that overlooks pleasing qualities. [Al-Minhaj, commentary

on the same hadith.] This trains fair attention without confusing an ordinary lapse with injury requiring protection. Recognise goodness and address actual wrongdoing; neither cancels the other. The teaching cannot bar someone from redress or qualified advice.

Honourable treatment appears in honest financial discussion, privacy, fulfilled agreements, appreciation of fatigue and restraint in disagreement. Tastes need not match, but differences should be discussable safely. Address one matter at an appropriate time without generalisations or repeatedly drawing families and confidences into conflict.

Distinguish religious obligations, valid agreements and additional kindness. Unspoken expectations readily masquerade as known rights. Learn and clarify without using texts only to demand what is yours and ignore what you owe.

Marriage does not abolish every private boundary or permit unlimited monitoring. Damaged trust requires facts, conversation and repair. Violence, threats and coercion require protection and appropriate help first.

Patience and another's virtues must not silence the injured.

Ask each other what one feasible change this week would ease shared life. Listen before answering, agree on a manageable commitment and review its effect without a trial. An apology becomes credible through conduct the other person experiences.

Chapter 153 — Children and Adolescents

In the account of a gift to al-Nu'man ibn Bashir, the Prophet commanded mindfulness of Allah and fairness among children. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2587]
Children need justice and mercy that permit questions and honest admissions. Do not demand truth and then make confession the beginning of endless humiliation.

They learn from adults correcting their own mistakes. Apology, restitution and kept promises make moral teaching visible. Contradictory conduct can teach that ethical language is merely an instrument of power.

Explain what is needed in terms suited to age and ability, check understanding and maintain consistent

limits rather than mood-dependent rules. Address the incident without permanent labels of laziness or dishonesty. Preserve the ability to ask, seek help and report harm without threatened exposure.

Adolescents need listening, reasons and appropriate responsibilities. A different lawful opinion is not itself disobedience; a request for privacy is not proof of corruption. Care and supervision remain proportionate to age, circumstances and real danger, neither unlimited spying nor neglect of obvious harm.

Listen to one conversation without making every sentence a lecture. Ask what is difficult and help with a practical step. State necessary limits clearly and calmly, preserving dignity during correction.

Chapter 154 — Neighbours and Guests

The Prophet joined refraining from neighbourly harm, honouring guests and speaking good in one hadith. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6018] Notice recurring noise, obstructed shared access, neglected communal property and disclosure of private matters learned through proximity.

Ibn Rajab's explanation connects disciplined speech with good companionship. [Jami al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, hadith 15.] Lowering noise, respecting common space and privacy, and giving appropriate help are present-day applications. When claiming a right, explain it clearly without recruiting the neighbourhood into a personal quarrel or exposing secrets.

Good neighbourliness does not require knowing every private concern. Help with visible needs respectfully. Describe a problem specifically and seek an arrangement preventing recurrence. If necessary, use lawful channels without excessive publicity or aggression.

Hospitality offers a warm welcome and what food, space and attention are feasible. It need not become a competition exhausting the household or financing pride. Guests should avoid overstaying and unreasonable requests, and protect what they see and hear.

Accept a declined visit without interrogating affection or honesty. Permission protects rest and household

arrangements; a general invitation is not access at every hour. Ask what suits illness or grief instead of adding the burden of receiving you.

Remove a disturbance you cause; it may help more than a gift accompanying continued injury. As a guest, appreciate what is available without comparison. Courtesy belongs on both sides of the door.

Chapter 155 — Work, Trade and Debt

Finding concealed dampness in a heap of food for sale, the Prophet asked why it had not been placed above where people could see it, and warned against cheating. [Sahih Muslim, 102] Disclose what materially affects the buyer's decision before payment.

Al-Sa'di includes fulfilment of obligations in exchanges within the command to justice. [Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman, al-Nahl 16:90.] Time, money and entrusted information carry real duties. Pleasantness cannot compensate for betrayal or delayed payment. Gentleness gains value when it accompanies justice and clear expectations.

Today this includes accurate descriptions and material conditions, rejection of fabricated reviews or testimonials, and images that do not conceal important defects. Buyers also owe fairness: no invented faults for compensation, denial of a service actually received or abuse of a worker unable to change an unwelcome decision.

The Prophet prayed for mercy upon someone easy in selling, buying and collecting payment. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 2076] Such ease does not cancel claims without consent. It governs how they are sought: clearly, without humiliation and with appropriate accommodation. The Qur'an commands respite for an insolvent debtor. [Al-Baqarah 2:280] The debtor owes honesty and must not delay while able to pay.

At work, honour contracted time, appropriate quality and early notice of consequential problems. Managers must not claim employees' work; employees must not conceal failures that burden others. Institutions owe clear instructions, due rights and a way to explain obstacles beyond a worker's control.

Review a product or service description. Does it imply more than you can supply? Correct it before it becomes a promise. Review a debt, owed or owing, and choose an honest course protecting both sides.

Chapter 156 — Leadership and Public Service

The Prophet prayed that Allah would treat gently whoever assumed responsibility over his community and treated them gently. [Sahih Muslim, 1828] A minor administrative decision can impose time and money costs unseen from an office.

Make services, eligibility and application routes clear. Avoid needless referrals and vague answers that leave people dependent on an official. Where a request cannot be fulfilled, explain why and any available route. Good wording cannot replace correcting an unjust procedure.

Hear criticism beyond those anxious to please. Provide a complaint channel preserving dignity and preventing retaliation, and verify before judging. Correct staff errors without public degradation or

blaming employees for unclear instructions and missing resources.

Gentleness does not require identical outcomes for diligence and neglect. Evaluate work by known, proportionate criteria with an opportunity to explain. Do not use penalties for personal quarrels or rewards to purchase loyalty at the expense of competence and trust.

Improve one burdensome procedure: a clearer message, respected appointment or properly assigned permission. People experience character through such decisions more directly than through a speech about service.

Chapter 157 — Disputes and Claims

The Prophet warned that one litigant may present a case more eloquently than another, and that an outward judgement does not make another's right lawful to someone who knows it is not theirs. [Sahih Muslim, 1713] Presentation cannot change truth.

Preserve evidence honestly, including facts weakening part of your claim. Do not coach a witness to report

what was not observed. Distinguish the money or apology sought from the desire to humiliate and exhaust an opponent. Keep unrelated family matters and secrets outside the dispute.

Reconciliation is good where valid and genuinely agreed; it cannot mean pressuring the weaker party so mediators can feel relieved. Hear both sides, clarify understanding, keep confidences and avoid promises beyond your power. Refer matters needing judgement or expertise to those qualified.

These are ethical foundations rather than a ruling on an individual case, whose contracts, evidence, laws and circumstances require appropriate legal and religious expertise. Appointing a representative does not remove responsibility for information supplied or actions requested.

Write the facts, evidence and specific claim without abusive descriptions, then consult someone competent and trustworthy. Clarity exposes additions born solely of anger.

Chapter 158 — Differences of Faith and Opinion

Allah permits kindness and justice towards those who have not fought believers over religion or expelled them from their homes, and affirms His love of the just. [Al-Mumtahanah 60:8] Religious difference does not permit cheating, injustice or betrayed trust.

Ibn Taymiyyah includes rejection of aggression and superiority in al-Wasitiyyah's conclusion. Faithful conviction requires honest representation of others. Do not attribute an unestablished claim to a disliked group or welcome a damaging report before verifying it.

Maintain belief and explain it wisely without lying about another's convictions. Respecting dignity does not affirm every statement; opposing falsehood does not authorise personal ridicule or assault. Distinguish explaining a belief or action from an unsupported judgement against an individual.

Differences among Muslims range from clear rulings to questions requiring qualified interpretation and

expertise. Personal preference must not always become allegiance and hostility, nor recognised juristic disagreement an accusation against faith. Learn a view's basis instead of substituting volume for knowledge.

Where discussion becomes mocking or unsafe, it may be appropriate to stop. No duty requires answering every comment or accepting every debate. Choose useful engagement and refer unfamiliar matters to specialists. Honour lawful cooperation without exploiting another's trust.

Test your fairness towards an unwelcome group: do you verify as carefully as for friends, and acknowledge a correct action? Conviction need not be surrendered for testimony to remain just. Others' unfairness does not cancel your duty.

Chapter 159 — Communication and Privacy Online

Allah commands sound speech. [Al-Ahzab 33:70]
Writing, posting and forwarding carry the same responsibility, with greater persistence and reach.

Applying al-Nawawi's limits on necessary disclosure to digital publication, ease of posting does not enlarge permission. [Riyad al-Salihin, chapter on permissible backbiting.] This is a modern application, not a claim that he discussed modern technology. A complaint to someone able to help differs from displaying private details to an unnecessary audience. A justified warning is not a collection of every flaw. Identify the legitimate purpose, recipient and sufficient amount; correct and remove harm where the purpose ends or error appears.

A true image may remain private. A useful story may teach without exposing its subject. Consent to a private message is not consent to public display, and availability does not grant unlimited use.

Criticise established words or actions without urging followers towards humiliation. Make corrections visible in proportion to the original accusation's reach. Passing on another's mistake still entails responsibility for repair.

Respect group purpose and people's time. Do not make a public audience leverage in a private matter.

Those facing digital harm may preserve necessary evidence, report appropriately and use protective measures without retaliatory aggression.

Before sending, ask whether you can own the words before those affected, know enough to support them and see a benefit in sending now. Otherwise leave them. Let your written presence offer reassurance, knowledge and help.

Chapter 160 — The Character No One Sees

Allah knows the treachery of eyes and what hearts conceal. [Ghafir 40:19] Our journey ends where people do not see: a trust honoured or betrayed, an unclaimed right returned or taken, a prayer for another or deliberate resentment of their blessing. None escapes Allah's knowledge.

Ibn Hazm's counsel to remember one's faults protects against intoxication with public standing. [Al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar, section on self-admiration.] In private this can become an unnoticed right fulfilled, an apology to someone unable to complain, or happiness

at goodness bearing no name of ours. We need not advertise faults; repair them and thank Allah for concealment and help. Preserve sincerity with hope and concern, without demanding credit or feeling beyond danger.

Private honesty supports public honesty. Keeping a confidence after disagreement shows a trust deeper than personal satisfaction. Fair defence of someone absent, without later informing them, trains seeking reward from Allah.

This does not require disabling inspection of every passing thought. Learn your duties, turn away harmful thoughts without dwelling on them, and correct chosen words, deeds and intentions. We are not asked to know the unseen judgement of our acceptance, but to hope, fear, work and seek a sound heart and good ending.

The opening supplication remains our need. Knowledge does not make us independent of guidance, nor progress place us above advice. We err and repent, receive concealment and give thanks, and hope that recognition of a fault begins its remedy.

Keep a good deed between yourself and Allah, fulfil a right no one demands, and refrain from a wrong you could commit. Continue learning and acting, gentle with fellow strivers and honest in returning. O Allah, guide us to the finest character and turn its evil away from us; none can do so except You.

At the End of the Journey

When Knowledge Reaches Our Dealings

The heart's need for guidance does not end when reading ends. We may close the book having learned more about patience, truthfulness and mercy, then meet a small test: a repeated question, a delayed appointment or unwelcome words. Knowledge begins to bear fruit when we seek Allah's help and choose a better sentence, restrain harm or return a right whose owner is waiting.

This journey should not make us quicker judges of everyone else's character. It should make us more aware of our duties and fairer towards others. Knowing the difficulty of our own struggle should prevent us from treating another's lapse lightly.

Knowing injustice's bitterness should prevent us seeking redress through another injustice. Mercy still allows clarification; privacy still leaves rights to be restored; apology still requires conduct that prevents recurrence.

We need character that remains when control of our public image weakens. Brief meetings can be prepared for. A lifetime occupies repeated details: addressing workers, answering an ageing parent, hearing someone we have hurt, keeping a confidence after disagreement. Saying our hearts are good cannot repair the wounds our actions leave.

Good character seeks Allah's pleasure without guaranteeing universal love or repayment. Someone benefiting from our dishonesty may resent truth; someone accustomed to unfair advantage may resent justice; an aggressor may reject a boundary. Examine knowledge, intention and manner, then continue rightly with gentleness and firmness. Neither approval nor opposition alone certifies our conduct. Revelation remains the measure, understood through knowledge and sincere counsel.

Humility leaves a door open to correction. Do not answer an adviser by announcing that you have read about ethics. Ask what they noticed, consider its truth and appreciate what is right. An initially unwelcome observation may expose a fault defended as temperament, humour or firmness. Caring for ourselves includes rescuing ourselves from persistent wrongdoing rather than acquitting ourselves in every case.

One setback cannot judge the remainder of a life. Sin requires repentance and injustice repair, but neither justifies despair of Allah's mercy. Begin with what can be repaired today: money returned, a false report corrected where published, an injury acknowledged without demanding immediate reassurance. Protect repentance through a practical change: a delayed response, an abandoned habit, helpful company or knowledge sought before speaking.

Some qualities will need longer than the programme you selected. Continue without making length an excuse to leave the path. Forty days neither completes education nor measures a person's standing with Allah. It organises a beginning. Truthfulness, mercy

and trustworthiness are lifelong companions. At the period's end, consider rights fulfilled, harm restrained and what remains to practise, then continue within your ability.

Keep supplication at the beginning, throughout the effort and after success. Progress calls for gratitude rather than admiration; weakness calls for continued dependence. We ask for guidance because knowledge alone does not protect us, for removal of evil because we falter, and for acceptance because our deeds depend on Allah's favour. A day may end well through easing one burden, preserving privacy where appropriate or protecting a right no one knew we could have neglected.

O Allah, praise belongs to You for what You taught us and the shortcomings You concealed. Guide us to the finest character and turn its evil away. Give us beneficial knowledge, reverent hearts and truthful tongues. Help us restore rights, mend our homes, have mercy on our parents, and forgive us and everyone who reads or assists this work. Make its goodness beneficial, forgive our errors and enable us to return to truth. May Your peace and blessings be

upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions.

Supplications for the Journey

Asking for the Finest Character

Guide me to the finest character; none guides to its finest except You. Turn its evil away from me; none turns its evil away from me except You.

An English rendering of the Prophet's supplication in prayer. [Sahih Muslim, 771, from Ali ibn Abi Talib; excerpt.]

Notice both requests: guidance to good and protection from evil. When asking for guarded speech, take its means in disagreement. When asking for mercy, make room for it in service. Supplication seeks help that reaches action.

Purification of the Soul

O Allah, grant my soul its piety and purify it; You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and Master.

English rendering. [Sahih Muslim, 2722, from Zayd ibn Arqam; excerpt.]

We cannot purify ourselves independently of Allah or declare ourselves complete. Seek His help, obey His commands and receive counsel that reveals what needs care.

Guidance, Piety, Chastity and Sufficiency

O Allah, I ask You for guidance, piety, chastity and sufficiency.

English rendering. [Sahih Muslim, 2721, from Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud.]

Guidance shows the way; piety governs action; chastity restrains the unlawful; sufficiency frees the heart from dependence on what others possess. Bring your need to Allah without making need of another person permission to violate their rights.

Guidance and Soundness

O Allah, guide me and keep me on the right course.

English rendering. [Sahih Muslim, 2725, from Ali.]

We need soundness of purpose, wording and judgement. An eager attempt to help is not automatically helpful. Pray, learn, consult and act upon what becomes clear.

Help in Worship

O Allah, help me remember You, thank You and worship You well.

English rendering. [Sunan Abi Dawud, 1522, the Prophet's counsel to Mu'adh; graded authentic by al-Albani. The counsel attaches this prayer to the close of each prayer.]

Gratitude uses gifts in obedience: strength to refrain from oppression, wealth to fulfil its rights, speech to tell truth and advise without unjust exposure.

When Anger Rises

I seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed.

English rendering. [Sahih al-Bukhari, 6115, from Sulayman ibn Surad, concerning a man overcome by anger.]

Seek protection, restrain harm and delay what can be delayed until judgement returns. Do not use the formula merely to accuse an opponent while forgetting your own duty to act upon it.

Steadfastness and a Heart Free of Resentment

Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us. Grant us mercy from Yourself; You are the Bestower.

Rendering of meaning. [Al Imran 3:8]

Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith. Place no resentment in our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord, You are compassionate and merciful.

Rendering of meaning. [Al-Hashr 59:10]

This prayer joins our own need for forgiveness to prayer for others. Reduce the causes feeding resentment. A sound heart still permits lawful redress and protection against injustice.

Returning After Error

Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. Unless You forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall certainly be among the losers.

Rendering of meaning. [Al-A'raf 7:23]

Adam and his wife joined admission to need. Seek forgiveness without defending the error, then repair what you can. These prayers do not constitute a newly prescribed litany or repetition count. Each transmitted text retains its setting. Other sound personal supplications may be offered without attribution to the Prophet.

A Practical Reflection Sheet

One Incident, Honestly Considered

Use these questions privately after an incident worth reviewing. Record what assists repair and protect others' confidences. There is no need to document every thought or assign a score to the heart's standing.

1. What happened? Describe the particular words and actions without sweeping labels.
2. What right did I owe? Distinguish obligations from additional kindness.
3. Where did I act well? Thank Allah and identify what helped.
4. Where did I err? Name the wrong without judging another's hidden motives or minimising harm.
5. What repair is needed? Consider restitution, correction, apology or stopping a repeated action.
6. When will I act? Choose a feasible time without postponing a right that can be fulfilled now.
7. What can change before the next incident? Adjust timing, ask before judging or remove a recurring trigger.
8. What should I ask of Allah? Pray for needed guidance, patience and truthfulness, then take the means you recognise.

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