

For Allah Alone

Sincerity

But Something Had Settled in His Heart

Volume One

An endowment dedicated to Allah

Madarej

Contents

Dedication	1
Introduction	3
Part One: Doing Good for Allah	5
1. The Heart and the Deed	5
2. What Is an Intention?	8
3. What Does Sincerity Mean?	10
4. Being True to What You Seek	12
5. Following the Prophet's Guidance	14
6. Worship in an Ordinary Day	17
7. Hoping for Paradise, Fearing the Fire	19
8. A Sound Heart Shows in Our Actions	21
Part Two: Sincerity in the Light of the Qur'an	25
9. Yusuf: "I Seek Refuge in Allah"	25
10. Ibrahim: For the Lord of All Worlds	28
11. Musa: A Kindness at the Water	30
12. The Wife of 'Imran: "Accept This from Me"	33
13. We Seek Neither Reward nor Thanks	35
14. "I Ask You for No Payment"	37
15. "Our Lord, Accept This from Us"	39
16. Charity Without Hurtful Reminders	42
Part Three: Intention Before, During, and After the Deed	45
17. The Journey and Its Purpose	45
18. Before You Begin	48

19. When Your Purpose Changes	50
20. After the Work Is Done	53
21. Even a Mouthful of Food	55
22. Held Back by a Genuine Excuse	57
23. When a Wish Is Sincere	60
24. Obedience and Lawful Benefit	62
Part Four: Deeds Allah Did Not Overlook	67
25. The Men in the Cave: Caring for Parents	67
26. The Men in the Cave: Turning Away from Sin	70
27. The Men in the Cave: The Worker's Wages	72
28. A Hidden Gift and an Honest Tear	75
29. When Charity Does Not Go as Expected	77
30. A Guest in an Ansari Home	80
31. Abu Talhah's Most Beloved Property	82
32. Abu Bakr: A Day Filled with Good	85
Part Five: What Undermines Sincerity	89
33. "And So It Was Said"	89
34. When We Work to Be Seen	92
35. Wanting Them to Hear of Us	94
36. Admiring Our Own Deeds	96
37. Do Not Let Fear of Showing Off Stop You	98
38. Praise You Did Not Seek	101
39. When Someone Offers Advice	103
40. When Someone Else Succeeds	105
Part Six: Sincerity at Home and at Work	109
41. Your Kindness at Home	109
42. Raising Our Children for Allah	112
43. Honesty at Work	114
44. Working Together	117
45. Good That Comes Through Someone Else	119

46. Before You Publish	122
47. People's Rights Remain	125
48. Mercy for a Vulnerable Creature	127
Part Seven: When Obedience Asks What We Find Difficult	131
49. Would You Not Love Allah to Forgive You?	131
50. Ka'b: Honesty About Falling Short	134
51. 'Umar: A Gift That Continues	136
52. Justice Towards Those We Dislike	139
53. Honesty in Buying and Selling	142
54. Zaynab: A Fair Word About a Rival	144
55. A Position Is a Trust	147
56. Do Not Claim to Know the Heart	149
Part Eight: Learning to Serve Sincerely	153
57. Bilal: A Deed He Hoped Would Be Accepted	153
58. Uways: Kindness Far from Fame	156
59. Ibn Rajab: Understanding Intention	158
60. Ibn Taymiyyah: Worshipping Allah and Seeking His Help	161
61. Ibn al-Qayyim: Sincerity, Honesty, and Following the Sunnah	164
62. A Sin Does Not Close Repentance	167
63. Sincerity Is Not Endless Doubt	169
64. Hidden Good and Open Responsibility	172
Part Nine: Renewing Sincerity for as Long as We Live	175
65. Know the Lord You Worship	175
66. Ask Allah to Put Your Heart Right	178
67. Pray for Someone Who Does Not Hear You	181
68. Self-Examination That Leads to Action	183
69. We Seek Forgiveness and Return	186
70. A Little Good You Continue	188
71. Sincerity and the Rest of the Heart	191
72. For Allah Alone	193

A Thirty-Day Practice for Training the Heart **197**

 Weekly Reviews and a Simple Scale 227

 Closing Check-In 228

Qur'an Index **229**

People and Themes **231**

Dedication

To you, who love Allah, hope for His pleasure, and long for your deeds to be sincerely for Him.

To you, as you try to put your intentions right: in a prayer you ask Him to accept, a kindness for which you hope for His reward, and a quiet plea: My Lord, make my heart sincere.

We offer you this book with love, whether you are taking your first steps or have spent years trying to improve. We need Allah's help as much as you do. We ask Him to forgive our shortcomings, help us obey Him, and grant us sincerity in private and in public.

When you ask Him to set your heart right, remember us in your prayers too: us, our parents, and everyone who helped these pages reach you. Ask Him to forgive us, purify our intentions, and accept our deeds.

May Allah make what you read beneficial to you. May He grant us all truthful words, good deeds, and intentions devoted to Him alone.

Introduction

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all worlds. He knows what we hide and what we make known. He hears our prayers and accepts the repentance of those who return to Him. We ask Him to set our hearts and our deeds right. May His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and all his companions.

You may spend hours helping someone, then go home waiting for a word of thanks. When it comes, you feel pleased; when it does not, you feel hurt. You may stand to pray, genuinely hoping for what Allah has promised, then notice yourself taking extra care because someone is watching. It is in these familiar moments that we begin to recognise our need for sincerity. It concerns the small details of a day, not only the great occasions of a life.

Sincerity means obeying Allah for His sake, seeking His pleasure and reward. You pray because He has commanded you to pray. You give charity seeking His countenance. You fulfil a trust out of obedience to Him. You do not make people's praise the reason you worship, or let the wish to please them lead you to disobey Him. Your work may need to be seen, or it may remain between you and your Lord. What matters is that your intention is sound and your action is something He approves.

Allah says: "Say: My prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of all worlds." [Qur'an 6:162] Here is a whole life lived in hope of His pleasure: worship, home, earning a living, and dealing with other people. We do not separate honesty in prayer from honesty in trade. We do not ask Him to accept our charity while treating the rights of someone who works for us as unimportant. We want to belong to Allah in the way that pleases Him.

The way to sincerity is not to stop doing good whenever we fear for our intentions. We are human. Praise pleases us, unkindness hurts us, and we grow tired and make mistakes. We need to learn the difference between a feeling that passes

through us and a purpose we choose to act upon. When we recognise a wish to show off, we resist it. When we become impressed with our own efforts, we remember Allah's kindness in enabling them. When we do wrong, we repent. We neither claim to be perfect nor settle for what needs to change.

There may be something close at hand through which you can begin: caring for your parents without reminding them of all you do, speaking truth even when it goes against your wishes, praying for someone who will never hear you, or returning money you could have kept without being found out. A small, unnoticed kindness can teach you to continue doing good when no one is paying attention.

We do not know what is in other people's hearts. We cannot declare that their deeds have been accepted or rejected. Each of us can, however, ask: What did I want from this? Did I do it in a way that pleases Allah? Then we can put right what we recognise and ask Him for help with what is beyond us. The Messenger of Allah said: "Deeds are only according to intentions, and each person will have only what they intended."¹

Our Lord, You know us better than we know ourselves. Set our intentions right, forgive our failings, and help us obey You. Do not let our only share of a good deed be that people speak about it. Grant us deeds that please You and that You accept. Bring the rest of our lives closer to Your pleasure, and make our actions for You alone.

¹ **Deeds and intentions.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Revelation, chapter 1, hadith 1; Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1907.

Narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Muslim's wording distinguishes migration to Allah and His Messenger from migration for a worldly purpose. The hadith establishes the importance of what a person intends; a good intention does not make an impermissible action right.

Part One: Doing Good for Allah

When we undertake something worthwhile, we want to do it properly. We learn how to pray so that our prayer is correct. We ask about someone's needs so that our charity reaches the right place. We think before speaking so that we do not mislead anyone. Yet, however carefully we work, one question remains: For whose sake did we do it?

An action may look correct while the person doing it does not seek Allah through it. Someone else may mean well but do something Allah has not permitted. We need both a sound intention and a sound action. We seek His pleasure through the means He has taught us.

This concern begins with ourselves. It is not permission to judge other people, nor a reason to postpone obedience until we feel certain our motives are perfect. We learn, act, correct ourselves, and ask Allah to accept us. The more clearly we understand sincerity, the more readily we can attend to it in everyday life, without neglect or excess.

1. The Heart and the Deed

People can see you praying, but they cannot see what you want from your prayer. They may know that you have given money, but not whether you sought Allah's pleasure or wanted a reputation for generosity. What they see does not tell them everything. Nothing about us, inward or outward, is hidden from Allah.

The Messenger of Allah said: "Allah does not look at your appearance or your

wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds.”² The hadith does not mention hearts alone, or deeds alone. We are responsible for what we intend and for what we do. It is not enough to make an action look good while seeking something other than Allah through it. Nor is it enough to say that our hearts are good while ignoring His commands and hurting His servants.

When we hear this hadith, it can be tempting to think of someone else. Yet we are the first people who need it. You know things about yourself that even those closest to you cannot know: how much you enjoy hearing your name mentioned, how your enthusiasm fades when someone else receives the credit, or how you want others to discover a kindness you kept quiet. Such awareness is a chance to improve, not a licence to accuse anyone else.

Imagine taking part in a project to help a family in need. You give your time and effort. Afterwards, some volunteers are thanked, but your name is left out. You feel hurt. Do not rush to conclude that everything you did has been wasted, but do not ignore the feeling either. Ask yourself: Would I have worked this hard if I had known no one would thank me? Will I now withhold help from this family because I went unmentioned?

The answer may reveal an attachment to praise that you need to work on. There may also be a genuine professional right or an obvious injustice to address. You can ask fairly for what you are owed without making applause the price of your kindness. Asking for fair treatment is not automatically showing off. Equally, talk of sincerity gives no one the right to exploit your effort or claim it as their own.

A heart can be affected before its owner chooses a response. A kind word pleases you; coldness hurts. Your responsibility is to be mindful of Allah in what you choose next. Do not let pleasure lead you into exaggeration or dishonesty. Do not let pain make you deny someone a right or act unjustly. Do not allow the wish for recognition to become the reason you worship. You are not asked to pretend you have no feelings. You are asked to choose well despite them.

²**Hearts and deeds.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2564.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Allah looks not at appearances and wealth, but at hearts and deeds. The two are joined: care for one does not excuse neglect of the other.

We also go wrong when speaking about the heart replaces doing what is right. Someone may say, “What matters is what is in the heart,” then neglect prayer, cheat a customer, or mistreat their family. If we seek Allah’s pleasure, caring for the heart includes trying to obey Him. We do not claim to know that person’s inner state. We do know that an action Allah has forbidden does not become good because someone describes their intention as good.

The opposite mistake is possible too. A person does a great deal, becomes satisfied with themselves, and stops accepting advice. They see the work but not the desire for admiration that may have entered it. Being able to do much good is a blessing, not proof that our intentions no longer need attention. Every act of obedience depends first on Allah enabling it, then on His help in completing it, and finally on His mercy and acceptance.

Putting the heart right need not begin with years of study. There are clear opportunities before you today: a promise to keep, a right to restore, a kindness to finish, a mistake to admit. Ask Allah for sincerity and attend to them properly. Some may be difficult. Your effort may consist simply in not abandoning what is right because you dislike it.

When you are helped to do good, thank Allah. When you recognise a failing, begin to correct it. Do not award yourself a general certificate of goodness, and do not dismiss all the good in yourself because you faltered once. Look at the deed in front of you and be truthful in it. A sound intention and a sound action meet in the prayer we offer and the care we take with another person, not merely in the description we give of ourselves.

At the next prayer, you need no long speech to yourself. Remember that you are praying to Allah, and pray as He has commanded. If your attention wanders, bring it back. If a wish to be admired arises, resist it. Begin with this present act, in which your heart and your actions can turn to Him together. Then ask Him to accept it.

2. What Is an Intention?

You know the difference between visiting a friend to see how they are and happening to meet them in the street. You know whether the money you hand over is a gift or the repayment of a debt. The movement may look the same, but you know what you mean by it. That purpose in the heart is an intention.

An intention is not a difficult phrase to recite or a mysterious feeling to search for. When you stand for the midday prayer intending to perform it, you have intended it. When you give money as your zakat, you know it is zakat rather than a present. Your heart does not need a lengthy explanation before its purpose becomes real.³

Sincerity adds another question: Why are you doing this act of worship? Are you seeking Allah's pleasure and reward, or people's admiration? You may know exactly which act you are performing and still need to put its purpose right. We pay attention to intention so that we know what we are doing and for whose sake—not so that we can repeat words that leave our actual desires unchanged.

The Prophet said: “Deeds are only according to intentions, and each person will have only what they intended.”⁴ This reaches into much of life. Two people may attend the same lesson. One wants to learn how to worship their Lord and benefit others. The other wants to be seen among people of knowledge. They sit in the same place and hear the same words. Allah knows why each is there.

This does not mean that a student may not enjoy the company of friends, take pleasure in learning, or hope for lawful work through an education. We have ordi-

³**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, “Deeds are according to intentions.”

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

⁴**Deeds and intentions.**

Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Revelation, chapter 1, hadith 1; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Leadership, hadith 1907.

Narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. Muslim's wording distinguishes migration to Allah and His Messenger from migration for a worldly purpose. The hadith establishes the importance of what a person intends; a good intention does not make an impermissible action right.

nary needs, relationships, and feelings. What requires examination is the worship we intend, the means we choose, and whether personal advantage is leading us away from what is right.

You might help a young relative study because you love them, want them to succeed, and hope for reward from Allah. These purposes can sit together. Later, however, you may notice that you resent another teacher helping them, or that you withdraw because they do not praise your explanations. Now there is something particular to address. Do you want them to learn, or do you want them to remain dependent on you so that they keep thinking well of you?

Intentions are not measured by how convincingly we describe them. It is easy to say, “I only want what is good,” then grow angry whenever a personal advantage passes us by. We need honesty at such moments. That does not require exposing our faults to everyone. It means acknowledging what we know about ourselves and working to correct it before Allah.

Sometimes good actions become routine. You buy groceries, take your mother to an appointment, or help your child with schoolwork without thinking of reward. Do not look backwards with a regret that prevents you from doing better now. In the next task, remember that you are caring for someone Allah has entrusted to you and treating kindly someone He has commanded you to treat kindly. The same familiar action can be accompanied by a better purpose.

A good intention, however, does not alter the wrongness of an act. Taking someone else’s money to help a third person does not turn theft into generosity. Lying to protect a good reputation does not become truthful because losing respect would be painful. Both the aim and the means must be right.

Nor should you postpone a duty until you feel perfectly sincere. You may be exhausted from caring for someone who is ill, or weary of repeated demands at home, yet still fulfil your responsibility for Allah’s sake. Tiredness does not make your care insincere. What you need may be His help and a more manageable division of responsibilities—not an accusation against yourself for every passing feeling.

As long as you are trying to obey Allah, there is room to correct your intention.

If you notice that you have started seeking praise, return to your better purpose. Do not defend the mistake or tell yourself that change is impossible. The first correction may be hard; you can learn to make it whenever the same weakness returns.

The useful question is not, “How can I describe myself as sincere?” It is, “What am I seeking through this action now?” If you want Allah’s pleasure, act in a way that pleases Him and ask for His help. If you recognise a corrupt purpose, repent of it. We learn about intention to put our worship and our lives right, not to become lost in doubt without end.

3. What Does Sincerity Mean?

Sincerity means directing your obedience to Allah, seeking His pleasure and reward, and giving no one else a share in your worship. You pray to Him, call upon Him, and give charity seeking His countenance. People may think well of you because of these actions, but their approval is not the purpose for which you worship.

Allah says: “Surely, pure devotion belongs to Allah.” [Qur’an 39:3] He also says: “They were commanded only to worship Allah, making their devotion sincerely His.” [Qur’an 98:5] Worship belongs to Him alone. Sincerity is not an optional refinement added after we have worshipped. It is part of what He has commanded in worship itself.

Allah told His Prophet: “So worship Allah, making your devotion sincerely His.” [Qur’an 39:2] A Muslim who reads this knows to care for the purpose of a deed as well as its appearance. We should not be content to make our obedience look beautiful while making people’s praise its goal.

In a sacred hadith, Allah says: “I have no need of any partner. Whoever does a deed in which he associates someone else with Me, I leave him and what he associated with Me.”⁵ This is a warning to take seriously. Allah has no need of our

⁵ **Devoting worship to Allah.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 2985.

A sacred hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah concerning a deed in which someone else is associated with Allah. It addresses the purpose adopted in worship, not every unwanted thought a servant resists.

actions. We are the ones in need of His mercy and acceptance. We must not use worship to obtain status among people, then reassure ourselves that its outward goodness is enough.

Consider a donation you can give to someone in need. You may give because you hope to please Allah and feel compassion for the person. Or you may give because a roomful of people is watching and you want them to call you generous. In both cases your hand passes over money. You know, though, that the purpose of one is not the purpose of the other. Here the question of sincerity becomes easy to understand.

Not every public donation is showing off. A project may need to make its funding visible, people may be encouraged by a good example, and donors may need to know what has been received. Nor does secrecy alone establish sincerity. Someone may keep a donation quiet while wishing everyone knew they were the sort of person who gives secretly. Visibility is one matter; intention is another.

We need this distinction. A sincere person is not someone who avoids every responsibility that puts them in view. They may teach a class, treat patients, or distribute help where others can see them. They try to serve people well and ask Allah to make their work for Him. They do not leave a useful place merely because people are present, or let those people become the reason they do good.

Sincerity does not require you to stop loving family and friends or thanking those who have helped you. These have their proper place. What you must not do is obey someone you love in disobedience to Allah, prefer their pleasure to His, or direct worship to them. Love people and treat them kindly; keep your worship for Allah alone.

Understanding this can bring relief. You need not spend every moment watching people's faces to work out whether they noticed you. Attend to your own purpose and what you can correct. If they see good in you, thank Allah without becoming self-satisfied. If they never discover it, the deed does not need an announcement to feel complete.

This is not achieved by one quick decision that requires no further effort. The wish to be praised may return, and you may give in to it. Yet you can return

too. When you catch yourself exaggerating what you did, stop speaking that way. When you recognise that you withheld help only because no one appreciated you, reconsider. Trying sincerely does not mean claiming that a fault has disappeared. It means making a real effort to remove it.

Sincerity is also wider than being afraid of showing off. It includes love for Allah, hope in what He has promised, gratitude for His kindness, and concern that He accept us. Knowing that He sees your kindness can help you no longer need everyone else to see it. Hoping for His reward can help you carry on without a word of thanks.

Give this meaning a place in one particular action. You need not examine your whole life at once. Begin with an act of worship today. Remember that you seek Allah through it, perform it well, and resist what you know is corrupting your purpose. Then ask Him to accept it. That is clearer and more useful than a great deal of talk about sincerity with no action to follow.

4. Being True to What You Seek

You can want something good yet hesitate to give it the effort it needs. You can also work enthusiastically towards a purpose that is wrong. We need a worthy aim and truthfulness in pursuing it. This is where sincerity and truthfulness meet, without becoming identical in meaning.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote: “The reality of sincerity is to make the One sought one; the reality of truthfulness is to make the seeking and the will one.”⁶ In simpler words: worship Allah alone, and be serious about the purpose you profess. Do not let your words say one thing while your conduct pursues another. A sound aim and a truthful effort support each other.

A student may say they want knowledge to benefit themselves and their family, yet refuse to learn from someone younger. A volunteer may say the needs of the

⁶**Sincerity, truthfulness, and following prophetic guidance.**

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin*, the station of sincerity, section on making the One sought the sole object.

The passage joins care for whom a servant seeks in worship, wholeheartedness in seeking, and following the Prophet’s guidance.

poor come first, then reject a useful suggestion because it was not their own. The declared purpose sounds good. Its truthfulness is tested when it asks them to surrender something their pride enjoys.

This does not make every hesitation a lie, or every weakness proof of a bad intention. We can genuinely want to do right and still fall short. But we should not use weakness to deny the principle or defend the mistake. We can say, “This is right, and I have not lived up to it,” then try again. Stumbling while trying to stand is different from declaring the stumble to be the right way forward.

One simple form of truthfulness is saying, “I do not know,” when you do not know. You may be among people who respect you and worry that uncertainty will lower you in their eyes. But what do you want from knowledge? If you want Allah’s pleasure and the questioner’s benefit, an answer you cannot support may harm them. Your honesty protects them from error and protects you from speaking without knowledge.

Sometimes truthfulness means taking back what you said. You read a report, shared it, and later discovered that it was false. You can search for an excuse to protect your reputation, or let those who received it know the correction. Returning from a mistake is not something shameful that needs to be hidden by stubbornness. The wrong lies in leaving people relying on a falsehood because admitting it feels difficult.

At home, small moments test us too. You promise your child something and forget. You raise your voice to your spouse or sibling and realise you went too far. If you want to draw nearer to Allah, let that include keeping your promise and apologising for your fault. The apology need not be elaborate. It needs to be honest and followed by whatever change you can make.

Scholars discussing this subject distinguish between sincerity, truthfulness, and giving others their due with genuine care.⁷ These distinctions keep us from being satisfied with a fine purpose merely announced. Seek Allah through your work,

⁷ **Sincerity, truthfulness, and sincere concern.**

Khalid ibn ‘Uthman al-Sabt, A‘mal al-Qulub, “Al-Ikhlās” (the section on sincerity).

Relevant discussions include the definition of sincerity, its distinction from truthfulness and sincere concern, its signs and dangers, and the means of cultivating it.

be truthful in that seeking, and fulfil what has been entrusted to you faithfully. Concern for intention must not become an excuse to neglect the people your work is meant to serve.

Truthfulness does not always feel like enthusiasm. Your feelings may become quieter while you continue doing your duty because you recognise and accept it. A useful project may begin with excitement and later become tiring. Continuing at a sustainable level, without neglecting obligations or wronging yourself or others, can be more truthful than grand promises you do not take care to keep.

Make realistic promises to yourself. Do not demand more than you can manage, then treat exhaustion as proof that you never wanted good. Organise your time, ask for appropriate help, and begin with what is possible. The aim is to bring your conduct into line with your good intention, not to invent an ideal image you cannot live inside.

Nor does truthfulness before Allah require constant explanations to people. Sometimes you need advice; seek it from someone trustworthy and knowledgeable. But everyone around you does not need an account of your inner struggles or a confession after every passing thought. Some improvements are quieter: you recognise a failing, ask Allah for help, and do the right thing when the opportunity comes.

At the next test, ask yourself: What does the purpose I claim actually require of me? If you want people to benefit, accept the more useful approach even when someone else suggests it. If you want truth, return to it even when it corrects your opinion. If you want Allah's pleasure, do not put the protection of your image ahead of what you have learned pleases Him.

5. Following the Prophet's Guidance

Someone can sincerely love goodness and still do something wrong. They want to draw near to Allah but do not ask: Has He prescribed this action? Am I doing it in the way His Messenger taught? A good purpose does not remove our need to learn the right way.

The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with our teaching will have it rejected.”⁸ Beside the question of sincerity stands another: Is the action itself sound? “We meant well” is not a sufficient answer. We seek good as Allah and His Messenger have shown it to us, not merely as we imagine it for ourselves.

Allah brings both matters together: “Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and associate no one in the worship of his Lord.” [Qur’an 18:110] A righteous deed accords with what Allah has prescribed, and sincerity directs it to Him alone. Ibn Kathir explains this meaning in his commentary on the verse.⁹

Scholars call following the Prophet in worship *mutaba’ah*. It means that we do not invent a special form, number, or promised merit for an act of worship and attribute it to religion without evidence. We learn from him both how to worship Allah and for whose sake our worship should be.

A beautiful supplication may reach your phone with a promise attached: repeat it a particular number of times and a certain result will come within days. You may love the prayer and wish its sender well. But you cannot attribute an unestablished promise to Allah. You may use a supplication whose meaning is sound without believing or sharing the unsupported addition. Affection for a message does not make its claims true.

There is an important difference between organising your practice and prescribing worship for others. You may choose a convenient time to read the Qur’an or an amount you can maintain, without claiming a special religious merit for that time or quantity. That is a practical arrangement. To tell people that an invented number guarantees an unseen result is a different claim and needs evidence.

A good cause does not permit a forbidden means either. Someone raising money for a person in need may exaggerate the story or add events that never happened to

⁸ **An action in accordance with the Sunnah.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Judicial Decisions, hadith 1718.

Narrated by ‘A’ishah. A deed not in accordance with the Prophet’s command is rejected. A sincere intention does not authorise the invention of an unprescribed act of worship.

⁹ **Explanation of the Qur’anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

move the audience. Someone defending a victim may wrong another person with an accusation they cannot establish. A sincere aim does not permit dishonesty or injustice. Seeking good does not release us from obedience while we seek it.

The same problem appears in ordinary dealings. You want to guide your child, but humiliate them in front of others. You want to correct an employee, but deprive them of their rights. You want to protect a charity's reputation, but conceal information its donors are entitled to know. A fine explanation does not settle the matter. Look at the action: Is it fair? Have you fulfilled the trust it involves?

Following the Prophet does not mean rejecting new, permissible tools. Teaching may happen in a room or through a screen. Charity may be delivered by hand or through a reliable transfer. Using a lawful means is not the same as inventing a particular act of worship and claiming it is prescribed. When the distinction is unclear, ask someone whose knowledge you trust rather than allowing enthusiasm to decide the issue.

Accepting correction can itself test sincerity. You begin something believing it is right, then learn otherwise. You feel embarrassed because you defended it and people know you for it. Yet you began in order to worship Allah, not to worship your own opinion. When the truth becomes clear through evidence, following it matters more than protecting a previous judgement.

Sincere people still need to learn. They can be unaware, forgetful, or in need of explanation. Asking a question does not diminish them. What harms them is pride that refuses clarification, or confidence in a feeling that makes evidence seem unnecessary.

Be gentle with yourself while learning and firm when you recognise an error. Do not condemn your entire past, and do not defend what has become plainly wrong. Correct what you can according to what you know and consult people of knowledge where needed. Say to yourself: I want Allah's pleasure, so I will seek it through what pleases Him. Then ask Him to accept your effort.

6. Worship in an Ordinary Day

You may imagine that concern for sincerity begins when prayer begins and ends when it ends. But your day contains much more, and many of its hours can be spent seeking Allah's pleasure. At home, someone needs your patience. At work, there is a trust to fulfil. Your money carries responsibilities. Your words can help people or hurt them.

Ibn Taymiyyah defines worship as “a comprehensive term for everything Allah loves and is pleased with, of inward and outward words and actions.”¹⁰ Love for Allah and reliance upon Him are worship. So are prayer and zakat. Truthful speech, fulfilling trusts, and kindness to parents belong among the actions He loves. Worship is not a collection of movements performed in one place, cut off from the rest of life.

This understanding offers a hope that is close to home. Someone caring for an ill parent may have long nights. Someone providing for a family may be tired. Someone raising children may repeat the same advice many times. These responsibilities are not all time lost to goodness. By fulfilling what Allah has required and hoping for His reward, you can find opportunities for righteous action in what once seemed merely an endless list of tasks.

The Prophet said: “When a man spends on his family, seeking reward for it, it is charity for him.”¹¹ He loves his family and is glad to see them comfortable. Alongside that love, he intends obedience to Allah by fulfilling their rights. He is not asked to remove natural affection before receiving reward, but to accompany it with a good purpose.

Consider buying what your household needs. You may do it resentfully because

¹⁰**The breadth of worship.**

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-'Ubuliyyah*, in *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, volume 10, on the meaning and forms of worship and the reality of servanthood.

The opening defines worship and includes inward and outward deeds, their connection to love of Allah, obedience to Him, and sincerity in serving Him.

¹¹**Seeking reward in supporting the family.**

Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book of Faith, chapter 41, hadith 55.

Narrated by Abu Mas'ud. Spending on one's family while seeking reward from Allah counts as charity. This intention accompanies proper support and protection of the family's rights.

no one seems to notice the effort. Or you may remember that Allah has entrusted these people to your care. The tiredness may remain, but your intention can help you avoid turning it into hurtful reminders of all you do. You may still ask others to share the work and arrange responsibilities fairly. Seeking reward does not require silence about genuine needs.

The same applies at work. Receiving a lawful salary does not mean there is no place for reward from Allah. You can honour a trust, refuse to cheat, and treat kindly someone you have the power to make life difficult for. Do not think that sincerity is meaningless because you are paid. The salary is an agreed right. Your intention to obey Allah matters alongside fulfilling the duties attached to it.

But “work is worship” must not become an excuse for missing prayer or neglecting your family. What Allah loves does not cancel what He has commanded. Earning money cannot be renamed worship to justify abandoning an obligatory prayer. Serving the wider community does not excuse withholding necessary provision at home. Such a person needs to reorder their responsibilities, not to praise themselves for being so busy helping others.

Permissible rest has its place as well. Sleep may help you attend to prayer and work. A break may help you return to your family with more patience. You need not live anxiously, treating every moment of relaxation as suspect. Use your time well, protect your obligations, and avoid what is forbidden. Where you can intend to regain strength for obedience, do so without turning a simple intention into another burden.

You may begin helping someone out of natural compassion, then remember that Allah loves kindness and seek His reward. That is a good opportunity. A natural beginning does not automatically spoil what follows. Renew your purpose and continue. Care for intention should add goodness to your actions, not make every kindness difficult through questions that never reach an answer.

This also helps us stop belittling other people’s service. You may have many opportunities to study, while another person has fewer because they care for a dependent relative. You do not know their standing before Allah or the sincerity of their efforts. Do not measure closeness to Him only by the activities whose titles

you can see. And do not dismiss the lawful good He has made possible for you.

Look at an ordinary day. Which trust could you fulfil more carefully? Which relative could you visit or call? Which words could you leave unsaid so that someone is spared harm? These do not replace your acts of worship. They belong to living uprightly alongside them. You pray to Allah, then go out among His servants trying to obey Him in the way you treat them.

Your schedule may look much the same, but your reason for living it can change. An unthinking habit can be accompanied by hope of reward; a recurring failing can begin to be repaired. You do not need to wait for travel, a position, or a great deal of money. You can seek Allah's pleasure in the life you already have.

7. Hoping for Paradise, Fearing the Fire

Some people hear that a truly sincere person does not worship Allah in hope of reward or fear of punishment, as though asking for Paradise were a lesser form of devotion. Yet the Qur'an teaches us to hope in Allah, fear Him, and ask for His mercy and generosity. We do not put our hearts right by removing qualities for which He praises His servants.

Allah describes His prophets: "They would hasten to good deeds and call upon Us in hope and fear, and they were humble before Us." [Qur'an 21:90] They desired what He had promised and feared His punishment while hurrying to do good. Hope and fear were not faults in their worship. They were among their praiseworthy qualities.

In Surat al-Insan, Allah describes people who feed others, saying: "We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We want neither repayment nor thanks from you." [Qur'an 76:9] They then say: "We fear from our Lord a grim and distressful Day." [Qur'an 76:10] Seeking Allah's countenance and fearing the Last Day appear together in their description, followed by the reward He has prepared for them.

When you ask Allah for Paradise, you ask your Lord for what He has promised His servants. When you seek protection from the Fire, you acknowledge His warning and your need for His mercy. Do not let the word sincerity make you embar-

rassed by these prayers. Worship Him, love Him, hope for His reward, and fear His punishment. These meanings need not compete with one another.

The difference between this and seeking admiration is clear. Someone who prays to be called righteous makes people's opinion a purpose in worship. Someone who prays to Allah hoping for His forgiveness and Paradise seeks what is with Him through obedience. Not every desire for a reward is the same. The reward Allah promises is itself something He teaches His servants to hope for.

You may also pray for an earthly need: recovery for someone ill, goodness for a child, a lawful livelihood, or relief from worry. This does not take you outside sincerity. You are asking Allah and acknowledging your need. What you must not do is turn obedience into a bargain in which you insist upon the exact result, timing, and manner of your choice.

You may pray earnestly while hardship remains. You may give charity without seeing the increase in income you expected. These are moments to remember what it means to be His servant. We do what pleases Him because we belong to Him, and hope in His kindness without inventing a claim by which we bind Him to our wishes. We have not been authorised to guarantee a particular worldly result for every good deed.

If something you hope for is delayed, do not treat the delay alone as proof that you were insincere. Pray, take lawful practical steps, and correct a failing you genuinely know about. But do not make claims about the unseen. A believer can be sincere and still be tested. Patience may be part of the worship required now, rather than the immediate fulfilment of a wish.

This protects the heart from both despair and self-satisfaction. Hope does not tell you that action is unnecessary. Fear does not tell you that mercy is beyond reach. Hope encourages you to return; fear helps you leave sin. Love and reverence for Allah bring them together.

Sometimes you obey without feeling the warmth you once felt. Do not assume that worship without strong emotion has no value. Consider what you intended and what you did. Resist heedlessness and seek attentiveness, but do not make tears or intensity of feeling the only measure by which you judge your worship.

A servant hopes their deed will be accepted; they do not declare it certain. After doing good, we do not say, “Now I deserve everything I want.” We thank Allah for helping us and ask Him to accept us. At the mention of Paradise, we ask Him for it. At the mention of the Fire, we seek His protection. Our hope remains in His mercy, not in admiration for our own achievements.

Ask Allah as He has taught you, without embarrassment at your need. Ask for His pleasure and Paradise. Seek refuge from His anger and the Fire. Do what you can to obey Him. Sincerity means directing all of this to Him, not trying to make the heart independent of the hope and fear it needs on its way to its Lord.

8. A Sound Heart Shows in Our Actions

When someone says, “My heart is good,” they may mean that they wish no one harm. That is something good to hope for. But the phrase can also be used to turn advice away: Do not ask about a prayer I neglect or a right I withhold; what matters is that my heart is good. Then talk of the heart becomes a way to avoid putting conduct right.

The Prophet said: “There is a piece of flesh in the body: if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. It is the heart.”¹² What is in the heart affects what the body does. A servant who takes the Lord’s command seriously tries to obey it. Someone who fears injustice restrains themselves from it. Someone who seeks Allah’s pleasure should not be content to seek it through disobedience.

This does not mean a believing heart never falls into sin. A person may give way to anger or desire, then regret it and return. We do not deny every good quality because of one wrong, or claim knowledge of what is hidden. We do distinguish between making a mistake and defending it with an assertion of inward goodness.

A father may hurt his child with harsh words, then say, “I love him. I only

¹²**The heart and the body.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter 39, hadith 52.

Narrated by al-Nu‘man ibn Bashir, concerning the lawful, unlawful, and doubtful matters. Its conclusion describes the piece of flesh whose soundness or corruption affects the whole body, identifying it as the heart.

want the best for him.” The love may be real, but the harmful speech still needs to change. He can love his child, acknowledge that his approach was wrong, and learn a kinder way. Admitting this does not deprive him of his place as a father; it fulfils part of the right of someone he loves.

A person may delay returning money they can afford to repay, then point to the charity and other good works they do. Those deeds do not cancel the debt. Sincerity in giving is one matter; fulfilling this obligation is another. Seeking Allah’s pleasure means not using a voluntary kindness we enjoy as an excuse for a duty we find difficult.

Nor is it enough to behave well where people praise us and behave hurtfully where their criticism seems unlikely. Repairing that difference may take time, but it begins by seeing it honestly. If you are gentle with strangers and harsh with those closest to you, the answer is not to become less kind to strangers. It is to give your family the kindness they are owed.

At the same time, much visible worship is not a final certificate that a heart is pure. Someone may perform many acts of devotion and still need to resist pride or showing off. That is why the hadith joins hearts and deeds.¹³ Neither makes the other unnecessary, and we are not able to weigh what is hidden within someone else.

Recognising our limits frees us from a tiring occupation: trying to decide who, among everyone we meet, is better before Allah. We are not charged with uncovering hearts. We love what is good, advise against what is wrong, and uphold people’s rights. Their degrees of acceptance and the sincerity we cannot see belong to Allah’s knowledge.

Begin with what you can recognise in yourself. Do you speak often about a good deed while seldom doing it? Do you know a clear duty but keep searching for a way around it? Let the questions lead to a decision, not to contempt for yourself: keep this appointment, return this money, leave these hurtful words unsaid.

¹³ **Hearts and deeds.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2564.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Allah looks not at appearances and wealth, but at hearts and deeds. The two are joined: care for one does not excuse neglect of the other.

You may need practical help. Difficulty controlling anger may call for learning, counsel, and changes in habit. Poor organisation may require a better daily routine. Asking Allah does not replace taking such steps. You ask for His help while doing what is useful. Keep the care of your heart close to the ordinary situations in which your mistakes recur.

When something improves, do not use it to congratulate yourself on being pure. Thank Allah and continue. If you recognise another fault later, do not be alarmed that improvement has not ended. As long as we live, we need His help. What matters is that we keep returning to the truth when it becomes clear.

The nearest answer to the claim of a good heart is to act upon what we know is right. We do not need to announce that we have become better. We need sincerity in prayer, honesty with money, kindness at home, and an apology when we are wrong. This is what we hope sincerity will produce. The Qur'an now brings us closer to that meaning through lives and moments in which obedience took a clear, practical form.

Part Two: Sincerity in the Light of the Qur'an

The Qur'an teaches us that obedience is not only something to speak about when life is easy. Yusuf sought refuge in his Lord when he was invited to sin. Ibrahim declared his worship for the Creator alone. Musa helped others, then asked Allah for the good he himself needed. In the prayers of the wife of 'Imran, and of Ibrahim and Isma'il, we hear the repeated plea for acceptance.

The situations differ, but they teach meanings we all need: putting Allah's command before our desires, asking for His help, giving without hurtful reminders, and refusing to become self-satisfied with what we have done. We do not stop at admiring the people in these accounts. We ask what their example means for something we can put right.

Our tests may not be as great as theirs. Yet we choose between truth and falsehood, trustworthiness and betrayal, kindness completed and kindness spoiled by harm. Through these choices, what we understand from the Qur'an can become part of the day we are living.

9. Yusuf: "I Seek Refuge in Allah"

The wife of al-'Aziz shut the doors and invited Yusuf—Joseph, peace be upon him—to herself. His refusal did not depend on someone standing there to watch him. "I seek refuge in Allah," he said. [Qur'an 12:23] He turned to his Lord for protection and refused a sin for which the opportunity had been made ready.

We need to pause at these words because we need them when there is no human observer. Fear of punishment or exposure may stop someone from doing wrong,

but it does not by itself teach the heart to obey Allah. What happens when they believe they will not be found out? Here we discover the importance of reverence for Him, fear of disobeying Him, and the wish to please Him in private as well as in public.

Allah says of Yusuf: "Thus We turned evil and indecency away from him. He was one of Our chosen servants." [Qur'an 12:24] In the Hafs reading, the word *mukhlasin* refers to servants whom Allah has chosen and purified.¹⁴ Protection from temptation is a favour from Him, not a personal strength that makes us independent of our Lord.

This becomes even clearer in Yusuf's prayer after he was threatened with prison: "My Lord, prison is dearer to me than what they invite me to. Unless You turn their plotting away from me, I may incline towards them and become one of the ignorant." [Qur'an 12:33] He had stood firm, yet still asked Allah for protection. He did not treat a previous refusal as a guarantee against every future temptation.

We sometimes tell ourselves, "I know my limits. I will not go too far," while keeping the causes of weakness close and repeatedly approaching what we fear falling into. We do not need to prove our ability to resist by deliberately exposing ourselves to sin. Obedience may mean moving away before temptation grows stronger and asking Allah to help us take a clear, protective step.

That step may be ending a conversation that does not please Him, avoiding an unlawful private meeting, leaving money we have no right to take, or declining work that depends on deception. You need not wait for the situation to become dramatic before your refusal matters. Recognising danger early can protect both you and other people from harm.

Yusuf's account also teaches that choosing obedience does not always make hardship disappear at once. Allah says: "Then, after they had seen the signs, they decided to imprison him for a time." [Qur'an 12:35] He entered prison despite the signs of his innocence. Doing what is right did not immediately protect him from people's

¹⁴ **Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2-3 and 53-54; 6:79 and 162-163; 12:23-35; 28:21-28; 3:35-37; 2:127-128 and 263-265; 76:8-10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

injustice.

You may refuse false testimony and anger the person who wanted it. You may remain honest and miss a material advantage. You may leave a forbidden relationship and feel the pain of loss. Pain alone does not mean that choosing obedience was a mistake. Learn whether your action was right, ask Allah for help with its difficulty, and use lawful means to protect yourself and seek justice.

Religion does not require you to love injustice or pretend that you are not hurt. You may ask for fair treatment, seek advice, and defend your rights. But do not make escaping pain a reason to return to something you know is forbidden. You may need patience and support. Asking for support is not a disgrace.

Many tests come in matters we hardly regard as important. You know something confidential and could use it to appear more informed than others. You could claim an achievement and not be found out for a long time. Access to a workplace account could give you an advantage you do not deserve. These are not separate from caring for your heart. In them you ask: Will Allah's command restrain me when no person does?

Even after refusing a wrong, another struggle may follow. You want to explain how you escaped it and how much stronger you were than other people. There may sometimes be a real benefit in speaking, but not everything Allah has concealed needs to be disclosed. You need not exaggerate a danger you faced so that people see you as virtuous. Thank Him for protecting you and guard your privacy and that of others involved.

Someone who has already fallen into sin should not read Yusuf's story as a verdict that goodness is now closed to them. His example shows us what to seek; repentance brings us back when we have failed. Do not surrender to an old sin or suppose that admitting it to Allah requires announcing it to everyone. Return to Him, close the routes by which you keep going back, and restore any rights that belong to others.

You may need to ask for protection repeatedly and make the same good decision more than once. This is not a performance of strength. It is an acknowledgement of need, joined to the practical step you can take. Be honest enough to say, "My

Lord, I am weak unless You help me,” and do not then deliberately leave every source of weakness open.

“I seek refuge in Allah” remains a short, clear plea. It needs no audience to be true. Let the words come from your heart when you are invited to do wrong, and follow them with the refusal you are able to choose. No one may know what you left behind. You can know for whose sake you left it and ask Him to keep you firm.

10. Ibrahim: For the Lord of All Worlds

Ibrahim—Abraham, peace be upon him—said: “I have turned my face to the One who created the heavens and the earth, inclining to the truth, and I am not of those who associate partners with Him.” [Qur'an 6:79] He devoted his worship to the Creator, turning away from false worship towards Allah alone. The practices of his people were not enough to make him follow them.

This is the foundation of sincerity, and we must not lose it while discussing motives, praise, and reputation. Worship belongs to Allah because He is our Lord and Creator. He gives us our blessings; we are His servants. We do not choose sincerity merely because people sometimes fail to appreciate our kindness. We choose it because He alone deserves worship, whether people thank us or not.

We need this reminder when loyalty to someone we love becomes confused with doing everything they want. You love your father and honour his rights, but do not obey him in disobedience to Allah. You love a friend but do not give false testimony for them. You belong to a team but do not let belonging become an excuse for its wrongdoing.

In Ibrahim's words to his father, truth is clear and the address remains tender: “My dear father, why do you worship what neither hears nor sees and cannot benefit you at all?” [Qur'an 19:42] He invited him to follow the knowledge he had received and warned him against obeying Satan and its consequences. Again and again he addressed him as his father, without surrendering the truth.

When his father answered with threats and rejection, Ibrahim did not imitate his harshness. “Peace be upon you,” he replied. [Qur'an 19:47] Holding to the truth

did not give him permission to abuse, and gentleness did not make him agree to falsehood. We need both qualities. It is possible to preserve one while neglecting the other.

You may know that a request is wrong and agree simply to avoid upsetting the person. Or you may refuse so harshly that you use religion to excuse your manner. There is another way: say calmly that you cannot do this, explain when useful, and offer a sound alternative. A courteous refusal is not weakness in the truth. A raised voice is not evidence of sincerity.

Imagine a colleague you care about asking you to confirm something you know is untrue. They say it is a small matter and that the whole team needs your support. Refusing may feel disloyal, but affection does not turn a lie into truth. Genuine concern means helping them put matters right, not joining an error whose consequences may grow for both of you.

Other moments require neither an announcement nor an argument. You can avoid a conversation that harms someone, decline to share an unchecked claim, or refuse a dishonest shortcut. Every refusal need not become an occasion to explain your righteousness. What matters is that some things remain right and binding for you even when giving them up would make you more popular.

Doing things for Allah does not make life smaller or require less love for people. You can learn, earn, marry, raise children, and serve your community while hoping for His pleasure. Many kinds of useful, permissible activity can belong to one life of worship. What needs correction is allowing the desire for money, status, or acceptance to carry you into disobedience.

We should also notice when our prayers turn earnestly to Allah in danger but forget Him when we feel safe. The Qur'an describes people who call upon Him with sincere devotion when distress surrounds them at sea, then act wrongfully after He saves them. [Qur'an 10:22–23] A servant needs sincerity in ease as well as in hardship.

When life is going as you hoped, thank Allah and use His gifts well. Health, money, and free time make possible things that hardship may later make difficult. Do not wait to lose a blessing before recognising your need for the One who gave

it. It is possible to be at ease and grateful without either manufactured anxiety or heedlessness.

Sincerity may also ask you to change an old plan. You start a project, then discover a more useful approach or someone better suited to lead it. If you want people to benefit for Allah's sake, do not treat your first choice as something that must always survive. Handing over a task or acknowledging a method's limits may be the honest work required now.

When you examine an excessive attachment to someone's approval, do not cure it by despising them or searching for their faults. They remain a human being with rights and a proper place in your affection. They simply do not have the power to make the forbidden lawful or obedience unacceptable. Honour them without giving them what does not belong to them, and preserve your ability to speak truth with kindness.

Ibrahim's declaration returns us to something clear: the Creator of the heavens and the earth is the One we worship. From that starting point, we learn to say of our own actions, "We seek what pleases Allah." Then we test those words in an ordinary choice: obeying Him without wronging someone who disagrees, and loving people without placing their wishes above our Lord's right.

11. Musa: A Kindness at the Water

Musa—Moses, peace be upon him—left in fear, asking his Lord to save him from the wrongdoing people. He travelled towards Madyan, hoping Allah would guide him along the way. When he reached the water, he found a group watering their animals and two women holding theirs back. [Qur'an 28:21–23]

"What is the matter?" he asked them. They replied: "We do not water until the shepherds leave, and our father is an old man." [Qur'an 28:23] They were waiting, and their father was too old to do this work for them. Musa saw a need he could help with, so he watered their animals.

The Qur'an then says: "He watered for them, then withdrew to the shade and said: My Lord, I am in need of whatever good You send down to me." [Qur'an

28:24] He helped, stepped aside, and asked Allah for the good he needed. His own need did not stop him from being useful to someone else.

This is close to the experience of many of us. You may be going through difficulty, looking for work, or waiting for support, then meet someone who needs information you have or an effort you can make. You do not have to wait until every part of life is settled before being kind. You can help in one area while needing help in another.

Being in need does not diminish the person who gives. You need not appear self-sufficient before someone you are helping. Allah has given you a measure of strength, knowledge, or opportunity through which you can benefit them. You can use it and still turn honestly to Him with your own needs. Giving does not make you independent of Allah; it can remind you of His kindness and your dependence on Him.

One of the women later came to Musa modestly and told him that her father wished to reward him for watering for them. When Musa came and told him what had happened, he said: "Do not be afraid. You have escaped the wrongdoing people." [Qur'an 28:25] The Qur'an goes on to tell of work and marriage being offered. Receiving the good that became available was not a condemnation of his earlier help.

We should therefore distinguish between seeking an improper return from the outset and receiving a lawful kindness without wrongdoing or a corrupt condition. Someone you assist may thank you or offer a permissible gift unconnected with a prohibition attached to your role. You do not have to refuse every kindness to prove your sincerity. Consider the ruling and the circumstances, not merely the fact that you benefited.

The account does not, however, give us a worldly outcome to guarantee for every act of help. We may not promise that helping someone will produce a job or marriage within a set time. What happened to Musa is true, and Allah's provision is greater than our expectations. We do good because He loves it, ask Him for what is good, and do not make obedience conditional on a gain we have selected.

Kindness also means leaving people their dignity. You may help a colleague

learn their job and then remind them at every success that they would be nothing without you. You may support a relative in crisis and later expect to be consulted about every decision they make. Helping does not give you ownership of another person's life. A kindness should not turn into a burden that makes its recipient wish they had never needed it.

Those who receive help should, in turn, acknowledge it and be thankful. A giver's sincerity does not make ingratitude a virtue. Each side attends to its own responsibility: the giver avoids hurtful reminders; the recipient does not deny the kindness. We do not use the virtue expected of one to cancel the obligation of the other.

Sincere assistance may be smaller than what someone asks of you. You can say, "I can do this, but not that." A promise you cannot keep may hurt a person who relies on it. Sincerity is not preserving the image of someone who is always capable. It is being truthful about your ability, fulfilling what you undertake, and pointing towards another useful source of help when you can.

Listen again to Musa's prayer: "I am in need of whatever good You send down to me." You may know a particular need and ask for it, or ask your Lord to choose the good He knows and you do not. Prayer need not be lengthy to be earnest. Sometimes the need is plain, the dependence is real, and the heart asks simply.

Remembering Allah's favour in what you give can lessen self-admiration. You did not create your strength, learning, or time from nothing. Your effort matters, and you thank Him for enabling it. His gift also brings responsibility. Do not let people's need for you make you feel superior; circumstances can change, and someone else may be given what you will need.

Begin with a small kindness: a task completed without a reminder of your favour, useful information offered without demanding loyalty, or a prayer after helping. You can benefit the person before you and still know how much you need your Lord. You give from what He has granted and ask from what He alone can grant, hoping He will set both your giving and your asking right.

12. The Wife of 'Imran: "Accept This from Me"

Before giving birth, the wife of 'Imran prayed: "My Lord, I have vowed to You what is in my womb, devoted to Your service. Accept this from me. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." [Qur'an 3:35] She intended her child to be dedicated to the service of the sanctuary in Jerusalem and asked Allah to accept her offering.¹⁵

She then gave birth to Maryam—Mary—named her, and sought protection for her and her offspring from Satan. Allah says: "Her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance, caused her to grow in goodness, and placed her in Zakariyya's care." [Qur'an 3:37] In these verses we find a mother's prayer, acceptance from Allah, and the care He arranged for Maryam.

Parents know something of this longing. Before a child grows up, the heart already holds many hopes: that they will be good, succeed, and be safe from what frightens us. Then we meet the real child, with their abilities, temperament, and needs. They may not resemble all we imagined. We need to ask: Am I seeking what is good for this child, or asking them to fulfil an image I have chosen for myself?

This does not mean transferring the vow in the account to everything we want from our children. A child has rights, and parenting has limits and responsibilities. Parents cannot make every personal wish binding by calling it sincere. What we learn here is to turn truthfully to Allah, care for the trust He has given, and ask for His help and acceptance.

You may be glad that your child has memorised some Qur'an, and that can be joy in something good. Yet you may notice that you are more interested in having guests hear it than in helping the child understand what suits their age and enjoy learning. A parent may be distressed by a child's mistake chiefly because it happened in public and embarrassed the family. These are invitations to examine intention quietly.

¹⁵ **Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

We want goodness for our children even when no one witnesses each step. We want their honesty even when it brings an admission we would rather not hear. We want them to feel safe enough to return to us, rather than hide a problem because it might spoil our image. Sincerity in parenting helps us put their welfare before admiration of ourselves.

A child may bring the same simple question again, or struggle at school in a way you did not expect. Such daily moments can test your patience more than an occasion when people praise your parenting. You may ask for help, learn another approach, and rest when you need to. But do not treat a child's weakness as a personal insult for which they must be punished.

The wife of 'Imran asked for acceptance. She did not become independent of Allah because her purpose was good. However much we learn about raising children, we remain in need of Him. We teach and pray, advise and show kindness, and seek forgiveness for our failings. We do not own their hearts or control how their lives will unfold.

This also protects us from judging families who have been tested. A child's goodness is not conclusive proof of a parent's perfect sincerity, and a child's difficulties do not prove corruption in the parents' hearts. Some responsibilities can be known and assessed. Hidden motives and the measure of another person's guidance cannot. Help rather than gloat, and advise without claiming knowledge you do not possess.

When Zakariyya found provision with Maryam and asked about it, she said: "It is from Allah." [Qur'an 3:37] Returning a blessing to its Giver teaches parents too. When you see goodness in someone you love, thank Allah rather than claiming all the credit. A relative may have supported them, a teacher taught them, and good company advised them. Honour those contributions instead of resenting that help came through other hands.

Your child may accept advice from a teacher that they did not accept from you. Do not make that a quarrel with the teacher. Ask whether the truth reached your child. If it did, be glad, and learn what may improve your own conversations. Parenting is not about remaining the only voice that matters. It is about helping a

child recognise and do what is good.

Sometimes sincerity requires an apology at home. You were harsher than you should have been or misunderstood what happened. Do not make your authority a reason to refuse to return to the truth. A calm admission teaches your child that being right matters more to you than winning, and that closeness to you does not remove their right to fairness.

Prayer does not excuse neglect of practical needs. Someone who asks Allah to guide a child but never listens, protects, or teaches needs to let action support the prayer. We entrust what we cannot control to Allah after taking the steps we can, not instead of taking them.

Ask for the help you truly need: My Lord, help me care well for those You have entrusted to me. Protect those I love, and guide us to what pleases You. Then return to a nearby moment that needs your gentleness. Caring for a child who cannot understand the extent of your effort may be one of the most honest ways to train your own heart to seek what is with Allah.

13. We Seek Neither Reward nor Thanks

Here the Qur'an describes not merely a feeling in the heart, but kindness reaching people in need—and then reveals what moved the givers:

“And they give food, despite their love for it, to the needy, the orphan and the captive, saying: ‘We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We seek from you neither reward nor thanks. Indeed, we fear from our Lord a Day, severe and distressful.’” (Qur'an 76:8–10; translation of the meaning.)

These verses bring together an outward deed, an inward purpose and the Here-after kept in view. Food reaches the needy, the orphan and the captive without a price being taken from their dignity. Sincerity changes not only how we give, but also what we leave in the heart of the one who receives.

The more exact test often comes after the deed. You do someone a kindness and hear no word of thanks; then the self begins to count what it gave. Do not deny

that ingratitude can hurt. Pause before hurt becomes a reproach, and ask: What return was I expecting but never named?

You may help a relative with their studies, then feel that their success gives you a claim over their future. You may stand beside a friend in a crisis, then resent it when they disagree with you. A good deed does not purchase another person's conscience or decisions. The purer our aim for Allah, the less we use kindness to control or humiliate.

We must distinguish an actual right from an imagined return. A worker's wages, a loan to be repaid, obligatory maintenance and a lawful contractual term are rights that may be claimed and protected. Praise and permanent loyalty are not debts created simply because we were kind. Do not call surrendering a right "sincerity," and do not call delayed praise an injustice.

Nor does the giver's sincerity teach the recipient to be ungrateful. Gratitude is a virtue, and recognising people's good is part of fairness. But we do not make their praise the goal of our deed or the condition for continuing every kindness. We thank those who have helped us, and seek Allah's reward for the good we offer.

Sometimes a reminder of a favour is spoken plainly; sometimes it is a story told again and again. A family's hardship may have passed, and they may wish to leave those difficult days behind, while the person who helped them keeps recounting the details in gatherings. Keeping financial records when needed is a trust; it does not give us permission to expose faces, homes or private matters. Before publishing a story, ask: Does this information serve the person in need? Do I have their permission?

Kindness is not only money. It may be information that saves a student time, an hour given to a child, food left at a neighbour's door, or a visit to a patient that is never photographed. Quiet acts train the heart to be content that Allah knows. Not every good deed needs to become a platform for us.

Sincerity does not mean accepting every request. You may be unable to help, find someone in greater need, or see that the proposed help could increase harm. Do not neglect an obligatory expense, leave ongoing harm unaddressed, or promise what you cannot deliver. Wisdom protects goodness from turning into injustice.

If someone's ingratitude wounds you, tend to the relationship in a sound way; do not let one wound close every door of kindness. The wish for recognition may not disappear at once. Still, you can refrain from reminding the person of your favour, seek forgiveness for the return your heart expected, and renew your purpose.

"We seek neither reward nor thanks" is a direction for the heart whenever it asks for its share: we give, preserve the dignity of the recipient, and leave our recompense with Allah. How merciful kindness becomes when no hurtful word is left behind.

14. "I Ask You for No Payment"

Nuh—Noah, peace be upon him—said to his people: "I ask you for no payment for this. My reward is only with the Lord of all worlds." [Qur'an 26:109] The same declaration appears in the calls of other messengers in this surah. They conveyed Allah's message, not treating people's response as a way to take their wealth or purchase status among them.

The verse reminds us of the trust involved in teaching and advice. When you know a truth someone needs, do not change it to suit their wishes. When someone asks what will help them, do not give an answer that protects your image at the expense of their welfare. Being truthful in explanation belongs to doing the work sincerely for Allah.

This does not mean that every lawful payment for teaching or service is forbidden. Payment has its own rulings and details. A teacher may receive a salary while genuinely wanting students to benefit and fulfilling the trust well. A volunteer may work without pay while seeking nothing but praise. The presence or absence of money does not, on its own, reveal a heart.

What we examine is whether money or acceptance is leading us into betrayal. Do we hide necessary information because it might upset a funder? Do we promise what we do not know to keep people following us? Do we say what an audience wants instead of what we have learned is true? These are choices we can review without any claim to know the unseen.

Imagine a teacher being asked a question they cannot answer. The class is used to seeing them as knowledgeable, and saying "I do not know" feels difficult. They may guess, or choose to check and return with a considered answer. The second course serves the students better, even though it does not preserve the image of someone who can answer everything at once.

The teacher need not explain that the pause was an act of humility. It is enough to be honest. Some forms of trustworthiness are simple in words and difficult for a self that enjoys admiration. Someone who loves to benefit the questioner for Allah's sake can direct them to a more knowledgeable person rather than use the question to secure their own standing.

A moving talk may attract many listeners. Its speaker then becomes used to embellishing stories to preserve the effect. That is a moment to stop. A story does not become true because it makes people cry, and retelling it does not become trustworthy merely because the stated aim is to remind them of religion. Listeners have a right not to be given an unestablished report as the Prophet's words or a guess as knowledge.

Advice also needs gentleness. Being sincere about truth does not justify adding unnecessary harshness to it. A correct statement can be delivered in a way that makes the hearer defend themselves rather than understand. Try to choose a suitable time, identify the error without humiliation, and allow space for a question or a return to what is right.

The person may still refuse your advice. That does not permit retaliation with harsher words, just as it does not permit changing the truth to make them like you. Learn what you can about communicating well, recognise the limits of your responsibility, and do not put their approval ahead of your honesty with them.

A sincere teacher can be glad when a student understands through someone else what they did not understand through them. You do not own knowledge or have exclusive rights over its benefit. Another explanation may suit that student better. Perhaps your earlier effort helped prepare them to understand it. Their improvement does not diminish you because another teacher's name is attached to it.

As a learner, you can help protect honesty too. Do not demand that everyone who teaches you be incapable of error. Value a correction. Do not mistake confidence of voice for reliability of meaning. If someone admits they do not know, do not ridicule them; the admission is more trustworthy than a confident answer without a basis.

Not every criticism of an adviser is correct. They may examine it, explain an error with evidence, and resist pressure to distort the truth. Sincerity does not remove the need to check or make every objection binding. It does prevent us from rejecting words simply because the speaker is less famous or because accepting them hurts our pride.

One of the hardest duties may be correcting an error we helped spread. Privately recognising it is not enough while people continue to rely on it. We should repair what we can clearly, bear the necessary embarrassment, and ask Allah for forgiveness. That serves truth better than defending a statement we know is wrong.

Knowledge and advice retain their dignity when we seek Allah through them and protect the rights of the person before us. We say what we know, pause where we do not, and treat learners kindly. Praise and popularity are not a certificate of acceptance from Allah. Work carefully, be glad when people benefit, and do not sell your trustworthiness to keep their admiration.

15. “Our Lord, Accept This from Us”

Ibrahim and Isma‘il—Abraham and Ishmael, peace be upon them—were raising the foundations of the Sacred House. In the midst of that great work, they prayed: “Our Lord, accept this from us. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing” [Qur’an 2:127] Their concern did not end with completing the building. They asked Allah to accept what they were doing.

We need this courtesy with our Lord. After working hard at something good, we can become occupied with the achievement and what people will say. We count the hours, remember the effort, and enjoy the result, perhaps forgetting to ask for acceptance. Something that impresses us about our own work may still contain

shortcomings Allah knows.

Asking Him to accept us is not thinking badly of Him or despairing of His mercy. We hope in His promise and generosity while recognising our limitations. We take the right steps without claiming that our action has guaranteed a result of our own choosing. Hope in Allah's mercy can live together with a servant's refusal to declare themselves pure.

The next verse continues their prayer: "Our Lord, make us submissive to You, and from our descendants a community submissive to You. Show us our rites and turn to us in mercy. You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful." [Qur'an 2:128] They asked for obedience, goodness for their descendants, knowledge of worship, and repentance. A great task did not bring their need for Allah to an end.

We sometimes treat a past act of obedience as though it should carry us through the rest of life. When advised about a present failing, we return to a list of things we once did well. But yesterday's obedience does not cancel today's duty. The One who helped us yesterday is the One whose help we need again today.

There is also a gentle lesson for shared work in the plural: "Accept this from us." Not every success is the story of one person. One gives money, another plans, another follows through, and others carry out tasks the public never sees. All hope for acceptance. Saying "from us" can help us remember those who shared the good instead of looking only for our own place in it.

This does not prevent recognising effort and thanking people. Fairness requires giving each contributor their due and making responsibilities clear. The self, however, may want more than fairness: a name larger than its contribution, or another person's part left unmentioned. A prayer for acceptance helps us address what records and reports alone cannot put right.

You may finish a successful volunteer project and read the numbers of people helped. Such information matters, but it cannot disclose Allah's judgement of the participants' intentions. You can be glad about the benefit, thank everyone involved, improve the next project, and ask Him to accept the one completed. Careful management and humility in worship are not opposites.

At the other extreme, you may see a fault and dismiss all your obedience. You lost attention for a moment or fell short in one area and conclude that Allah accepts nothing from you. You have no knowledge that permits such certainty. Correct the known fault, seek forgiveness, and hope in your Lord's mercy. Do not praise yourself without right, and do not sentence yourself to deprivation without right either.

Asking for acceptance should accompany the completion of a trust. A campaign may end while money remains unaccounted for. A lesson may finish with information that needs correcting. An event may close while a worker's wage remains unpaid. Prayer does not replace these obligations. A person truthfully seeking Allah's pleasure tries to repair what is still within reach.

You may be tired and feel that reviewing everything will only add to the exhaustion. You are not asked to investigate without end. Distinguish between a clear right still owed and an unsupported doubt. Pay what is owed, correct what you know is wrong, then leave what is beyond your ability to Allah and do not imprison yourself away from the next good action.

This prayer can accompany ordinary deeds, not only large projects. You pray, read, spend, and care for your household, then ask Allah to accept you. No one needs to hear the request, and it requires no special appearance. It is enough to know your need and be honest in your hope.

It can also lessen the need for reassurance from people after every effort. Encouragement is welcome, but Allah's acceptance does not depend on it. If they praise you, thank Him without becoming complacent. If they say nothing, do not turn their silence into a judgement on your worship. You are asking the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from whom nothing inward or outward is hidden.

Our Lord, accept this from us. Say it remembering that He enabled the deed before it began, helped you while you did it, and grants acceptance through His favour. The words do not make you better than someone else. They remind you of your need. It is good for obedience to end in gratitude and prayer rather than self-admiration, reminders of favours, or a search for praise.

16. Charity Without Hurtful Reminders

Someone in poverty may need a kind word as urgently as they need money. You give what helps them, then speak about their helplessness in front of others. Or you help once and remind them of it whenever they disagree with you. The money reached their hand, but harm followed it.

Allah says: "A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by hurt." [Qur'an 2:263] You may have nothing to give, yet decline gently and overlook someone's insistence. That is better than a gift followed by injury. The worth of kindness is not only in its amount, but also in keeping it free from what Allah has forbidden.

He also says: "You who believe, do not invalidate your charity with reminders of your generosity and hurt." [Qur'an 2:264] A hurtful reminder places the giver above the recipient or uses a past kindness to demand something not rightfully owed. It can be explicit or merely hinted at in words whose meaning the other person understands all too well.

In the same passage, Allah gives an image of spending to be seen: a smooth rock covered with soil, struck by heavy rain that leaves it bare. Then comes the image of spending to seek His pleasure: a garden on high ground that yields its fruit in heavy rain, and still benefits if only a light rain falls. [Qur'an 2:264–265]

The images show how actions differ according to the purpose beneath them. People may see money being spent in both cases, but spending for admiration is not the same as spending for Allah's pleasure. We do not use the images to declare the secrets of named people. We read them to take care of our own deeds and recognise what needs correcting.¹⁶

Hurtful reminders also show that care for intention does not end when money leaves your hand. You may have given with a good purpose, then become angry with the recipient and said something cruel. Do not claim that the first intention

¹⁶ **Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

settles everything that came afterwards. Attend to what you are doing now. Repent of the harm and repair what you can.

Clarity from the outset can help. Is the money a gift, a loan to be repaid, or payment for work? Clear terms protect rights. A lender can seek repayment through lawful means; not every reminder of a debt is blameworthy. But someone who gave freely and later tries to control the recipient through the gift has attached a demand that was never theirs to make.

Harm may occur in the way help is delivered. You keep someone waiting deliberately so they feel their dependence on you, speak with contempt, or impose unnecessary burdens before they can receive support. Review what can be improved. Let the benefit reach them safely and respectfully rather than requiring them to pay in dignity on top of the need they already bear.

Organised projects still need eligibility checks and proper records. These protect funds and help them reach those entitled to them. Yet the procedures can be respectful, the requirements explained clearly, and private information kept secure. Sincerity does not oppose good organisation, and good organisation does not require humiliation.

A project you supported may fail, and you may feel angry. You may ask about the money, require accountability, and pursue a proper way to correct what went wrong. Hoping for acceptance does not mean remaining silent about a broken trust. Avoid, however, what is not yours to do: accusing hearts, circulating unverified claims, or humiliating someone who was not responsible.

Small gifts also have their place. Do not withhold what you can give simply because another person gives more. Your resources may be limited. Begin with what does not undermine an obligation, take care with its purpose and destination, and leave it free of hurtful reminders. We do not know the measure of what Allah accepts, and we do not confine reward to the large amounts that impress people.

Regular giving needs a realistic arrangement. Choose an amount you can sustain, find a useful place for it, and renew your intention. Every donation need not wait for a new story that stirs your feelings. A continuing need you can support is an opportunity for good even when speaking about it draws little attention.

If you have already followed kindness with a reminder or an injury, acknowledging it need not end the good. Ask Allah for forgiveness, stop returning to the harmful words, and repair what you can. An apology, removing something you published, or changing a degrading procedure may be part of that repair. Saying that you meant well is not enough while leaving the harm in place.

The charity we hope to offer Allah is good in both purpose and action. We give from lawful wealth, seek genuine benefit, preserve the recipient's dignity, and ask for acceptance. Then we do not use what we gave as a right to insult anyone. In this way, our kindness stays close to the meaning we loved in the Qur'an, rather than becoming a fine-looking deed spoiled by what we said afterwards.

Part Three: Intention Before, During, and After the Deed

We may begin an action for Allah, then find a desire for praise entering it. We may finish a kindness, then speak about it in a way that hurts the person we helped. Caring for intention therefore belongs not only to the beginning, but also to the work itself and to what follows.

This does not mean living in constant anxiety. Intention is a purpose we can recognise well enough to correct; it is not a riddle that must be solved before every movement. We act upon what we know, resist what we recognise as harmful to our purpose, and ask Allah for help throughout.

There is mercy here too. A sincere intention may bring goodness to someone a genuine excuse prevents from acting. An ordinary task may become an opportunity for reward when done with a good purpose. We learn to distinguish inability from laziness, and lawful benefit from showing off, so that we can do better without either exaggeration or carelessness.

17. The Journey and Its Purpose

In the hadith about intention, the Prophet said: “Whoever’s migration was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration was to Allah and His Messenger. Whoever’s migration was for worldly gain or a woman to marry, his migration was to that for which he migrated.”¹⁷ An observer sees a journey and a change of place. Its

¹⁷**Deeds and intentions.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Revelation, chapter 1, hadith 1; Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1907.

Narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Muslim’s wording distinguishes migration to Allah and His Messenger from migration for a worldly purpose. The hadith establishes the importance of what a

meaning before Allah depends on the purpose of the person who makes it.

The hadith does not make seeking a lawful livelihood or marriage sinful. It distinguishes a journey for a worldly purpose from migration intended for Allah and His Messenger. An action does not receive the description and reward of an act of devotion merely because it resembles one outwardly. Intention matters.

We can see this in familiar situations. Two people attend a lesson: one wants useful knowledge, while the other wants to be seen among righteous people. A third may come for a permissible reason without intending worship at all. We see attendance. Allah knows what each intended. Being in the same place does not establish that everyone came for the same reason.

Sometimes we concentrate on changing the shape of our lives while delaying the correction of what we want from them. You move to a new job, join a charity, or change your circle of friends, then discover that your old hunger for praise has come with you. The change may still have been useful. It simply did not remove the need to work on yourself in the new setting.

A good intention is not a heading written at the start and forgotten. You may join a project to benefit people, then gradually become most afraid of losing your position within it. When someone suggests sharing your responsibilities with a person better suited to part of the work, you become angry. Ask: Do I still want the benefit, or do I now need the benefit to remain attached to me?

Sincerity may mean helping correct an error in a group you love. Loyalty does not require defending everything the group does. You can protect information that should remain confidential, advise through an appropriate route, and refuse to take part in deception or injustice. Loving the work does not release you from being mindful of Allah within it.

It is also good to describe lawful purposes honestly. If you travel for trade, you need not make people think you left out of complete indifference to worldly life. Lawful business is not an embarrassment that needs a religious story to conceal it. You may earn a living and intend the good that can properly accompany it without claiming a purpose that was never yours.

person intends; a good intention does not make an impermissible action right.

Nor must every personal choice become a grand spiritual declaration. You may choose a job because its hours fit your life or because it is nearer your family. The question is whether it is lawful and whether you fulfil its responsibilities, not how beautifully you can describe yourself for choosing it. Honesty about your motives makes the real work of correcting them easier.

For major decisions, asking about purpose can help put practical considerations in order. What do I want from this course of study? What can I manage? Is the way I am taking sound? Would following this desire cause me to neglect a right already owed? These questions do not extinguish ambition. They make ambition more trustworthy.

You may say you want to benefit thousands while repeatedly failing to keep one modest appointment. Do not ignore the gap. It need not mean every hope is false, but it asks you to give that hope some truth in the nearby task you can perform. Wide benefit depends on faithfulness in details, not only on inspiring talk about the future.

Allah may allow you to begin something that others complete. You establish a lesson or a service, circumstances change, and other people carry it on. If it remains useful, your absence is not a loss to goodness itself. You can be glad, pray for it, and help as you can without requiring your name to appear at every stage.

People do not know every reason behind your decisions, and you need not explain them all. Sometimes clarification protects a right or answers a false accusation; provide it where needed. But an intention between you and Allah does not become truer through repeated descriptions. Let your conduct show what must be shown, and be truthful both in what you disclose and in what you keep private.

If you discover that you have forgotten a good purpose you once had, do not despair. Consider what changed and correct the next step. That may mean apologising, returning a trust, accepting cooperation, or stopping an attempt to draw praise. A sincere beginning does not replace sincere continuation, just as a passing weakness does not prevent a return.

The hadith of migration asks what we truly seek, not what image we want others to see. Let the answer be a deed closer to Allah rather than a longer account of

ourselves. Know the purpose for which you set out, protect it from what is wrong, and ask your Lord to put both the beginning and the end right.

18. Before You Begin

You are about to send advice to someone who has made a mistake. The message is long, and you are angry. You can send it immediately, or pause: Is what I have written true? Do I want to help them correct the error, or make them feel that I am better? Is there unnecessary hurt in these words?

The pause need not last long. It may remove one cruel sentence, suggest a private conversation instead of public embarrassment, or persuade you to wait until you are calmer. Concern for intention has then done something useful. It has not remained a discussion about a pure heart while the harm goes ahead unchanged.

Before prayer, you need not work through all these questions. You know that you are going to offer this prayer to Allah, so begin it as prescribed. The aim is a present purpose, not a long inner speech before every act of worship. Understanding intention this way lets you act without unnecessary complication.¹⁸

Some people wait for strong emotion before trusting their worship. They delay because they feel neither enthusiasm nor tenderness. But purpose is different from intensity of feeling. You may do a duty for Allah while tired. You may fulfil a relative's right while finding it difficult. The difficulty need not disappear before your wish to obey becomes sincere.

Before an action, you need enough knowledge to know that it is sound and a good intention in doing it. If you do not know the ruling, ask. If you know you are doing it to be admired, correct that purpose. But do not demand certainty that your whole self is free of every fault as a condition for beginning. You were not commanded to delay obedience until then.

¹⁸**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

Money raises clear questions that a wish to look generous must not hide. Is it yours? Are you entitled to use it this way? Are you fulfilling an obligation or giving something beyond what is already owed? Someone may donate shared funds without the owners' permission, then feel pleased at having helped. Care for intention begins here with respecting the trust, not overlooking it.

A report may anger you and make you want to defend a victim. That is a worthy purpose, but it does not remove the duty to check. Sharing an accusation you cannot establish may wrong another person while you think you are serving justice. Before publishing, find out what you reasonably can, remove certainty you cannot support, and care more about truth than being first to speak.

You can also bring a good intention to a familiar task without rebuilding your whole day. Go to work intending to fulfil what has been entrusted to you. Learn a skill to benefit yourself and others. Care for your household hoping for reward. You do not need a long list of intentions that never actually entered your heart. Be truthful in one clear purpose and act upon it.

It may help to notice the particular place where you repeatedly struggle rather than inspect every minute. If you rush into telling people about your achievements, pause before that conversation. If criticism makes you harsh, attend to the moment you reply. Correcting a known difficulty is more useful than a wide anxiety with no beginning and no end.

Practical preparation can support sincerity. Preparing a lesson reduces the temptation to improvise exaggerated claims to keep attention. Being clear about the help you can provide prevents promises you cannot keep. Organising your time makes it less likely that you will blame pressure for your roughness with someone waiting for you.

Do not make intention an excuse for delaying someone's right. A person may say they cannot act until they are sure of their sincerity, then leave a clear obligation undone. What is the person you owe supposed to do while waiting for that certainty? Fulfil the duty and ask Allah to put its purpose right. Care of the heart should not become a reason to neglect His servants.

Once you have begun with a good purpose, continue. Do not return to the

beginning at every moment to ask whether you really intended it. Correct a known mistake if one appears, but do not give a bare possibility control over your worship. Learn unclear rulings from people of knowledge rather than allowing fear to invent rulings for you.

Ask Allah for help before something difficult. You need no special, lengthy prayer for every task and no invented form. Ask for what is sound: help to be truthful, protection for your tongue, and a good intention. Then take the step available to you. Supplication accompanies action rather than taking its place.

A short, honest pause can prevent harm, restore a right, or improve a sentence. This is one benefit of attending to intention. When you know what is required, do not remain standing before yourself forever. Go towards what pleases Allah and ask Him to help you do it and accept it from you.

19. When Your Purpose Changes

You begin reciting in prayer for Allah, then become aware that someone is listening. You want them to think well of your voice and devotion. You did not invite the thought, but it has appeared. What now? Declare the whole prayer ruined? Welcome the thought and perform for the listener? Or resist it and return to your original purpose?

There is a difference between what occurs to the mind and what we choose to entertain. A thought you dislike and push away is not the same as a purpose for which you begin an action. We need this distinction because unchecked fear can make us treat the very thought we hate as proof that we wanted it.

The Prophet said that Allah has pardoned his community for passing thoughts within themselves so long as they neither act on them nor speak them.¹⁹ This is mercy concerning passing inner thoughts. It does not remove responsibility for every deliberate, settled purpose of the heart. Showing off, firm resolve, and other

¹⁹**Unwanted passing thoughts.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oaths and Vows, chapter 15, hadith 6664.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The pardon concerns passing inner thoughts not acted upon or spoken. It does not extend indiscriminately to every forbidden intention deliberately adopted and maintained.

inward actions have their own rulings. A resisted thought and a chosen intention must not be treated as identical.

In his explanation of the hadith on intention, Ibn Rajab distinguishes between a deed begun for display, a wish to show off that arises and is resisted, and one that arises after a good beginning and is then indulged. Scholars discuss details concerning the last case.²⁰ When you notice something wrong, your immediate task is to resist it, not nourish it, and not pass a judgement on your worship merely because you are frightened.

You may be giving a useful talk when the audience's admiration tempts you to add a story you have not verified. It would make the talk more moving. Here there is a clear correction you can make: leave the story out. Continue with what you know to be sound. You refrain not because the opportunity is absent, but because you recognise that the addition would be wrong.

A quieter audience may bring a different test. The speaker feels unappreciated, becomes harsh, or stops giving the service they came to offer. Yet the listeners may be tired, the talk too long, or the explanation unclear. Sincerity helps the speaker ask what would benefit them instead of punishing them for insufficient admiration.

In shared work, you may begin wanting to serve, then become attached to the standing you gain. "I began for Allah" does not settle what has changed. Consider your present choices. Are you blocking others from contributing? Hiding a mistake to preserve your image? Refusing to let someone more capable take over? These are places where you can choose honesty now.

You do not need to announce every inner struggle to those around you. Sometimes private advice is useful; seek it. But explaining an unsettled heart to a whole audience is not always the remedy. Ask forgiveness quietly, change what you do, and protect the rights of those relying on you. Explain only what genuinely needs explaining, not what will advertise how carefully you examine yourself.

²⁰**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

In prayer especially, do not interrupt the worship on your own authority merely because a thought disturbed you. Resist what you do not want and complete the prayer properly. Ask people of knowledge about a ruling you do not understand. Do not automatically repeat the act whenever anxious thoughts return; repetition can increase confusion without correcting the purpose.

You may find more energy for worship in company than alone. That alone is not showing off. Other people may encourage you, remind you, or provide a helpful structure. This differs from improving a performance in order to win their praise. A difference in energy, with several possible causes, is not enough to declare a heart's intention.

Helpful gentleness includes naming a fault without turning it into a permanent verdict on your entire self. Say, "In that situation I sought praise, and I need to repent and change." Do not say, "There is no good in me, so nothing I do matters." The first points to a responsibility. The second may persuade you to abandon improvement altogether.

Knowing a recurring trigger can help. If checking comments distracts you from an honest message, check them less. If admiration makes you embellish, prepare your words beforehand. If an omitted name angers you, practise recognising other people's contributions fairly. These are useful means, not guarantees that remove the need for prayer and reflection.

Even noticing a fault can become a source of self-admiration: you congratulate yourself on seeing what others have missed. Thank Allah instead for bringing the failing to your attention, and work to correct it. Recognising a problem does not end our need for Him. It makes our need for His help in changing it more apparent.

A purpose can be corrected while the work continues. Do not surrender to what has gone wrong, and do not abandon what remains good because you fear for it. Return to seeking Allah, complete what you owe, and ask for acceptance. Repeated returns are more hopeful than insisting on the wrong or giving up on resisting it.

20. After the Work Is Done

You have given the donation, completed the help, or borne an injury patiently. The act is over, but your attention may keep returning to it. You want to say how much you gave, let people know what you did, and hear your patience praised as someone else's generosity was praised.

Not every account of a good deed is forbidden. Work may require a report. An honest example may encourage others. Explaining your contribution may protect a right. But the telling needs intention and trustworthiness just as the deed did. What do you want the listener to know, and why?

You may say you are speaking of Allah's blessings, yet tell the same story in every gathering and add details that make you look better. Pause at the addition. Gratitude does not require a lie, exposure of someone's vulnerability, or a suggestion that you are superior to everyone present. If the telling is thankfulness, let it be true and free of harm.

One of the most damaging uses of a kindness is to bring it up in a quarrel. You helped a relative; later they disagree with you, and you remind them of what you did. It is as though accepting your earlier gift removed their right to advise or differ with you. You can have been generous in one matter and wrong in another. The first does not shield you from correcting the second.

Allah forbids invalidating charity through reminders of generosity and hurt. [Qur'an 2:264] The warning concerns what follows the giving too. Remembering your first intention is not enough while ignoring a present injury. When you recognise the harm, stop, repent, and repair what you can of the effect of your words.

Unsolicited praise may come and please you. Abu Dharr reported that the Prophet was asked about someone who does good and is praised for it. He replied: "That is the believer's early glad tidings."²¹ Mere pleasure at kind words does not

²¹ **Praise after a good deed.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2642.

The Prophet described praise received after doing good as the believer's early glad tidings. This differs from beginning worship in order to obtain praise. See also Ibn Rajab's discussion in note [56].

prove the action began for display. What needs care is the move from receiving praise to deliberately arranging more of it by any available means.

Someone thanks you in a gathering, and it reminds you of other good things they do not know about. You can leave the moment as it is, or steer the conversation until they hear more. It is a small choice and a real opportunity for honesty. You need not complete the picture of your goodness in their minds. Leaving unnecessary details untold may be better for your heart and kinder to others involved.

When an experience genuinely needs sharing, separate its benefit from the display of yourself. Explain the idea and the useful steps without naming a recipient or revealing what would embarrass them. You may not need to identify yourself as the person who acted. Choose what conveys the lesson truthfully and protects rights, not merely what increases admiration.

Fairness sometimes does require correcting the credit for an achievement. If someone else is credited in a way that affects an assessment, payment, or a misleading claim, you may explain the truth courteously. Sincerity does not require agreeing to falsehood. But not every passing conversation that omits your name is an injustice requiring a response.

You may protect an action from public discussion and still admire it privately. You decide that you are better than your colleagues or deserve more respect. Secrecy alone does not cure self-admiration. Remember who enabled you, how little you know of their hidden good, and how much of your own life still needs attention.

This does not mean belittling everything you do. Being glad that Allah helped you obey can lead to gratitude. The grateful person recognises a gift and returns its credit to Him. The self-admiring person begins to feel independent and superior. We need the first response and must resist the second.

After a reasonable review, there is a time to move forward. Some people remain trapped in a finished deed, revisiting it until they neglect what lies before them. Correct an error you know about, fulfil a right you still owe, then ask for acceptance and go to the next duty. Do not demand that memory provide the complete knowledge of your inner self that belongs to Allah alone.

A good way to end a kindness is to thank those who helped make it possible. Your family, fellow workers, and the person who told you of the need all contributed. Concern for your own intention must not make you forget their rights. Recognise their help fairly and pray for them even if they never know.

The action ends; our need for Allah remains. We do not recover its price from people through words that hurt them, become proud of it within ourselves, or despair because we recognise a flaw. We correct, ask forgiveness, and hope for acceptance. Then we begin another good deed with a clearer purpose and greater care for the person it will reach.

21. Even a Mouthful of Food

The Messenger of Allah told Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas: "You will not spend anything seeking Allah's countenance without being rewarded for it, even the food you place in your wife's mouth."²² That small word, "even," brings the meaning close. Reward is not confined to a rare act far beyond ordinary life. It can be found in providing for a home and offering food to someone you love.

Think how familiar the scene is: food at home, a married couple, a simple kindness. Seeking Allah's pleasure allows a servant to hope for reward in something they might otherwise dismiss as routine. You do not need to turn life into an unusual performance to find an opportunity for sincerity.

Another hadith says: "When a man spends on his family, seeking reward for it, it is charity for him."²³ He loves and benefits them while intending to fulfil their rights as his Lord has commanded. Natural affection does not compete with seeking reward when the action and purpose are sound.

At the end of a day you may think, "I found no time for much good." Look again.

²² **Even food given to one's wife.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter 41, hadith 56.

Narrated by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. The report promises reward for spending in pursuit of Allah's pleasure, including what a person places in his wife's mouth.

²³ **Seeking reward in supporting the family.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter 41, hadith 55.

Narrated by Abu Mas'ud. Spending on one's family while seeking reward from Allah counts as charity. This intention accompanies proper support and protection of the family's rights.

You cared for a parent, attended to a child's need, spent some of your earnings on your family, and fulfilled a trust. Familiarity need not make these things seem worthless. Learn to seek Allah through them and perform them well instead of always waiting for another kind of good outside your own life.

Seeking reward does not require telling your household each time that supporting them is an act of worship. Such repeated declarations may themselves become hurtful reminders. It is enough that Allah knows your purpose and that what is owed reaches your family with dignity. Do not make those whose rights you are fulfilling feel like an unbearable burden.

The amount given may be adequate while the manner needs repair. A person provides money but humiliates, mentions their generosity in every disagreement, or uses necessities as a means of control. Financial provision does not make up for every kind of harm. Someone seeking Allah's pleasure tries to let good treatment accompany the spending.

Those who receive provision should also recognise the effort and be grateful. Hoping for reward for the giver does not permit others to dismiss their tiredness. A household can cooperate, order its needs sensibly, and listen to one another. Teaching sincerity must not become a way to overload one person and then blame them for asking for help.

Much work at home becomes visible only when it is no longer done: cooking, cleaning, caring for a young child, sitting up with someone ill, and remembering recurring details. Whoever does it hoping in Allah should not despise the work. Whoever benefits should not treat it as something unworthy of thanks or shared effort. Kindness begins by noticing what those beside you carry each day.

You may be gentle with a guest while impatient with the family who are always there. A home need not remain in guest-receiving condition every hour, but closeness is not a reason to drop good character. The people who love you should not receive the smallest share of your patience because you do not expect to lose them quickly.

It is wise to acknowledge tiredness before it becomes harmful behaviour. You can say that you need rest, ask for tasks to be shared, or postpone what is not urgent.

Sincerity does not mean pretending never to tire. It means being truthful about your purpose and your capacity, and not making others bear the consequences of promises you could not keep.

Spending has limits that protect it from wrong. The money should be lawful, the use permissible, and no obligation should be lost through excess or unfair treatment. A good intention adds goodness to a sound action; it does not turn overstepping into virtue. If the order of people's rights is unclear, ask rather than choosing what feels appealing and calling it generosity.

The first improvement at home may be small: fulfilling a need without a cutting complaint, listening before answering, or helping with something you had assumed belonged entirely to someone else. You need not wait until every family disagreement is resolved before beginning with an obvious kindness within your power.

Remember what the Prophet said to Sa'd. Seeking Allah can accompany a mouthful of food at home. This does not diminish larger deeds. It keeps us from neglecting the good nearest to us. Do not let those you love be the last to receive your good character because the world outside offers louder applause.

Your family may not remember each time you bought food or attended to a need, but you can hope for what is with Allah. That hope does not oppose gratitude or cooperation. It makes the kindness more truthful and less burdened with reminders. Begin at home, seek your Lord through what you do each day, and do not dismiss a sound deed because its outward form is ordinary.

22. Held Back by a Genuine Excuse

During an expedition, the Prophet said: "There are people we left behind in Madinah who are with us whenever we travel through a mountain pass or a valley. A genuine excuse held them back."²⁴ They remained in the city, but Allah knew the

²⁴ A genuine excuse preventing participation.

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad, chapter 35, hadith 2839.

Narrated by Anas. The Prophet spoke of people remaining in Madinah through a genuine excuse who shared in the reward. True inability joined with intention is not the same as avoidable idleness while able.

sincerity with which they wished to take part in the good.

This offers hope to someone prevented from doing what they love. Health may fail after years of ability. Money may become scarce after plenty. An unavoidable responsibility may keep a person from something they had hoped to join. Not everyone absent from a good deed is indifferent to it, and not everyone unable to act is deprived of every share in its good.

We must also notice the word “excuse.” The mercy in the hadith does not turn unwillingness into inability. Someone able to fulfil a duty should not leave it and settle for saying their intention is good. A sincere purpose joined to a real barrier differs from a comforting wish used by someone who does not want to make an effort they can make.

A change in health can be hard to accept. You remember what you used to do, read about others’ devoted efforts, and feel there is no longer a place for you among them. You need to remember that Allah knows your condition and does not require what you cannot bear. Do not belittle your hope or make illness a verdict on your closeness to Him.

Grieving over a missed act of worship is not, by itself, a rejection of Allah’s decree. You may long for a mosque you used to attend or a service you loved providing. You can ask for recovery, feel the loss, and still remain a servant who turns rightly to the Lord. You are not required to pretend the change does not hurt.

Some good may remain possible in a different form: an honest word, a prayer, advice within your knowledge, or kindness to someone caring for you. We can remind a sick person of these opportunities without requiring them to prove their usefulness before we respect them. They have a right to care and mercy. They do not owe an achievement that compensates everyone else for their illness.

Someone staying beside a dependent parent or a child with no other carer may be fulfilling a responsibility that comes before a voluntary activity. Absence from visible service is not always a lack of commitment. Remember that the person who is missing may have a trust you do not know about or an excuse they do not wish to reveal.

You need not explain every medical or family detail to everyone who asks. Clarify what is necessary to arrange a responsibility or answer a false accusation, and protect the rest. At the same time, do not leave people waiting for you without notice. A timely, clear apology belongs to trustworthiness even when the details remain private.

It may hurt to see someone else take over work you loved. Do not condemn yourself for every ache, but take care not to turn it into a wish that they fail. Pray for them, be glad that people still benefit, and help in the ways you can. The work did not become bad because you are no longer the person doing it.

Nor must you direct every detail from a distance to reassure yourself that you still matter. Your successor may need advice, but also space to learn and act. Offer what you know honestly. A method different from yours is not necessarily wrong merely because it is different.

If the barrier lifts, truthful hope can include preparing to do what is possible again. You need not make grand promises. You may intend to resume a good habit at a level that suits your condition, beginning realistically. If the barrier remains, continue asking Allah for good rather than punishing yourself for an ability you do not possess.

When helping others, do not use this hadith to silence practical needs. A person unable to participate may need access, an adapted way of joining, or care that makes participation possible. Do not simply say, “Your intention is enough,” while withholding assistance you could provide. Hope for Allah’s generosity towards them and fulfil your own duty towards them.

A heart may both hope for reward and long for the action itself. That is a good thing: loving obedience rather than only its image before people. Take a genuine opportunity when it comes, and do not despair when it does not. We do not invent an exact equality between every unable person and every able person in all circumstances. We believe the promise given and think well of our Lord.

Those companions crossed no pass or valley without the excused believers sharing in the favour the Prophet described. Their feet did not carry them there, but their sincerity was known to Allah. Let the genuinely prevented person honour a

good intention, and let the able person not use intention as an excuse for doing nothing. Mercy and truthfulness belong together.

23. When a Wish Is Sincere

The Messenger of Allah said: “Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will bring him to the stations of the martyrs, even if he dies in his bed.”²⁵ This great favour is connected to truthfulness in asking. The mention of dying in bed also matters: the hadith does not tell a person to expose themselves to destruction or disregard the limits of the religion in pursuit of this rank.

The concern here is an honest heart. A good wish is not merely fine words we repeat about ourselves. It is something we genuinely love and ask Allah for. Ability and circumstances may prevent a particular action, but He knows both what we wanted and what prevented us.

You may wish for wealth with which to help people in poverty. That is a good wish when its purpose and means are right. But you need not wait for great wealth before being truthful with what you already have. Do you fulfil a small right you know about? Protect money entrusted to you? Help through the time or knowledge you can offer?

This is not a way of dismissing every large hope because its owner once fell short. We all weaken. It is an invitation to give a good wish some possible action, rather than leave it as pleasant talk that changes nothing. A small step can teach the self that what it wants is more than an image it enjoys.

You may want knowledge through which to benefit others, yet postpone an accessible lesson whenever its time comes. Ask honestly why. Is a more important duty occupying you? Do you need to organise better? Is the goal beyond your current capacity? Addressing the actual reason is more useful than repeating a general reproach without changing anything.

²⁵ **Sincerely asking for martyrdom.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1909.

Narrated by Sahl ibn Hunayf. Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom may reach the martyrs' ranks even if death comes in bed. The hadith encourages sincere supplication; it does not permit deliberate self-harm or disregard of religious limits.

Perhaps you dream of leading a large project but reject a modest task whose worker will remain unknown. Then ask a significant question: Do I love the benefit itself, or the thought of being the person others point to because of it? You need not answer by speaking cruelly to yourself. Accept a genuinely useful task you can do, even if it does not give you the image you imagined.

Some beginnings are not impressive. You learn foundations that cannot be skipped, practise keeping a small trust, or maintain a modest effort. This is not an insult to your ambition. The wider benefit you hope for needs knowledge, time, and experience, not enthusiasm alone.

You may proceed gradually. You are not required to fulfil every good wish immediately at the greatest possible intensity. Your responsibilities and capacity have limits. Distinguish what you can do now from what you hope to do later, and take suitable steps. Honest gradual progress differs from postponement by someone who never intends to begin.

Allah may grant another person what you hoped for: learning, success, or an opportunity to give. You can ask Him for His favour and love that person's good at the same time. Do not resent a benefit merely because it came to someone else. If you wanted people to be helped, be glad that help reached them even without your hands.

That gladness may require effort. Comparison and discomfort may arise; do not obey them by belittling the other person. Ask Allah to bless their work, learn from what they have done well, and continue with what is possible for you. You need not have every ability they possess or achieve exactly what they achieved to have a share in righteous action.

As we hope for the reward of a good intention, we should also beware of cultivating a bad one. The heart is not outside responsibility. There is a difference between a thought you dislike and resist and a desire you deliberately nourish while waiting for an opportunity. Do not call the second "only a thought" and then let it guide every choice you can make.²⁶

²⁶**Unwanted passing thoughts.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oaths and Vows, chapter 15, hadith 6664.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The pardon concerns passing inner thoughts not acted upon or spoken.

Ask Allah for truthfulness in what you want. Ask Him to make goodness dear to you and help you do it. Then move away from something you know weakens you and towards something that helps. This prayer is not a public promise about your future greatness. It is a request to the Lord who knows what you really are.

You may need to tell a teacher or partner your aim so that they can help with a plan. That differs from repeatedly describing the impressive deeds you intend to do in order to be admired. Speak as much as the work requires, and give yourself time to act truthfully before describing at length what has not yet happened.

Take one step from a good wish today. If you hope for knowledge, learn something useful. If you hope to give, offer what you can. If you are unable, ask Allah honestly and do not dismiss His favour. Do not declare yourself pure because of what you wished, and do not belittle a good intention held back by a real excuse. Ask that your heart contain what He loves, then act within your ability.

24. Obedience and Lawful Benefit

You work to earn a living, enjoy your profession, hope to help people, and feel pleased when your effort is recognised. Does the presence of these different purposes make seeking reward from Allah impossible? It is not that simple. We must distinguish an advantage Allah has permitted from worship performed for people's admiration.

Learning a skill to earn lawfully is, in itself, a permissible aim. Alongside it, you can intend to support yourself, fulfil your family's rights, and benefit those you serve. You need not claim that the salary means nothing in order to appear sincere. Being honest about a lawful need is better than denying it and then becoming angry when it is not met.

Prayer, charity, or Qur'an recitation used as a way to be called righteous belongs to a different matter. We should not rename showing off as a harmless social benefit and make light of it. The warning remains: "Whoever does a deed in which he associates someone else with Me, I leave him and what he associated with Me."²⁷

It does not extend indiscriminately to every forbidden intention deliberately adopted and maintained.

²⁷Devoting worship to Allah.

A lawful worldly benefit can accompany an act of worship. A person fasts for Allah and is glad of some permissible benefit, or travels for obedience and encounters an opportunity for lawful trade. In terms of the completeness of one's purpose, an intention devoted wholly to Allah is higher than an intention accompanied by a permissible benefit that does not undermine the act itself; showing off and seeking reputation belong to a different category altogether.²⁸ Scholars discuss the details of these situations; they are not all identical in ruling or in their effect on reward.²⁹ We should neither treat every benefit as an accusation nor use that distinction to excuse a corrupt purpose we recognise.

Conflicting interests often make the question clearer. You want profit and honesty: what do you choose when a lie would increase profit? You want your project to succeed and know of a defect you must disclose: do you hide it to keep people interested? Such decisions reveal what needs correction more usefully than trying to assign unknown percentages to every feeling in your heart.

Someone working without pay may be unable to tolerate an omitted name. Someone paid for useful work may fulfil it faithfully while hoping for Allah's reward. No salary is not conclusive proof of sincerity; a salary is not proof of display. We can assess visible duties and conduct. Allah knows intentions.

You may begin a job thinking only of income and later learn to seek reward through doing it well. You need not dismantle your life or pretend that every past step was worship consciously intended. Be honest now: this is a lawful livelihood I seek, and I want to fulfil its trust for Allah without wronging those I deal with. Improving the future is better than inventing a flattering story about the past.

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 2985.

A sacred hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah concerning a deed in which someone else is associated with Allah. It addresses the purpose adopted in worship, not every unwanted thought a servant resists.

²⁸**Sincerity, truthfulness, and sincere concern.**

Khalid ibn 'Uthman al-Sabt, *A'mal al-Qulub*, "Al-Ikhlās" (the section on sincerity).

Relevant discussions include the definition of sincerity, its distinction from truthfulness and sincere concern, its signs and dangers, and the means of cultivating it.

²⁹**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

With gifts and bonuses, intention is not the only question. A gift may be prohibited because of an office held or a right involved, even if someone says they mean well. Another gift may be entirely permissible. Learn the ruling on the action, then attend to your purpose. A good intention does not make a breach of trust lawful.

Sincerity does not require giving up lawful income your family needs to prove that you are detached from the world. You may ask for your rights, negotiate fair pay, and choose among permissible options. What you must not do is use gain to justify deception or direct worship towards a position in people's hearts.

Likewise, being glad about a useful outcome after a good deed does not prove that you did it for that outcome. People may love you because of a kindness through which you did not seek their love. An opportunity may come that you never expected. Do not turn a later result into a definitive verdict on a beginning you know was directed to good.

Equally, do not cling to an old intention to defend conduct you know has changed. You may have begun by offering honest advice, then started concealing what should be explained to avoid losing an audience. The first good purpose is not enough. Correct the present intention and the present behaviour rather than using the past to protect yourself from review.

When something is unclear, ask a specific question. Explain the work, the benefit, and the point of concern to someone knowledgeable instead of asking only, "Am I sincere?" No one can inspect your heart. They can explain a ruling and help you understand a mistake to avoid.

While you learn, hold to what is already clear. Do not lie, neglect rights, or perform worship for people. Do not despise what Allah has allowed. Renew your purpose in the deeds through which you seek Him and ask forgiveness for your shortcomings. You need not solve every subtle question before acting on what you know.

The heart needs education, not a war against every human need. We love our families, seek lawful provision, and enjoy being useful. We give these things the place that pleases Allah while refusing to turn worship into a search for admiration. This distinction makes honesty possible in the life we actually live, not merely in

an image we present to others.

Part Four: Deeds Allah Did Not Overlook

A deed can be so familiar that we think little of it: caring for parents, returning what is owed, or feeding a guest. Then we read a hadith that shows the great worth such an action may have when it is sound and its doer sincerely seeks Allah through it.

The account of the men in the cave brings together kindness to parents, chastity, and trustworthiness. Elsewhere we hear of a hidden donation, a guest honoured in a household that itself had little, Abu Talhah giving his most beloved property, and a day in which Abu Bakr combined several kinds of good. Sincerity is not confined to one outward form of worship.

These accounts invite us to act, not to wait for an unusual situation that matches every detail. What can we do for Allah today? Who needs our care? Which right remains unfulfilled? What kindness is within reach without any need for people to know?

25. The Men in the Cave: Caring for Parents

Three men were caught in rain while travelling and took shelter in a mountain cave. A rock fell across its entrance and trapped them inside. Unable to leave, they said to one another that they should remember good deeds they had done sincerely for Allah and call upon Him through them, hoping He would relieve their distress.³⁰

³⁰**The cave: kindness towards parents.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith 2743.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. The man waited for his parents to wake before serving their milk, then prayed to Allah through this deed done for Him. The encouragement of parental kindness does

One began with his parents. They were elderly, and he used to tend livestock for his household. When he returned, he milked the animals and served his parents before his children. One day he had travelled further in search of pasture and returned to find his parents asleep. He milked as usual, brought the drink, and stood near them, unwilling to wake them or to serve the children first.

He remained until dawn, with the children at his feet. In the cave he prayed: “If You know that I did this seeking Your countenance, open a gap for us through which we can see the sky.” Allah opened a space in the rock through which they could see it.³¹

This was care at home for two elderly parents. It was not a gathering in which the man spoke impressively about dutifulness. It was a service he had performed while seeking Allah. In distress, he remembered it and prayed through it. The report shows the permissibility of asking Allah for relief by mentioning a righteous deed sincerely done for Him, hoping in His mercy.

We learn care and sincerity from the account without turning every detail into something to copy without understanding. Dutifulness must not be understood as permission to harm other people in our care. Where rights meet, we need to know what is required and protect them as far as possible. Following a good example does not mean overlooking another right Allah has commanded us to honour.

Care for parents is wider than a moving moment we enjoy retelling. It includes checking medication, keeping an appointment, arranging food, and being present when someone feels alone. The need may recur until the carer is tired. At that point we need an intention that supports patience, not an attractive image of dutifulness admired only when it costs nothing.

A person may enjoy kissing a parent’s head in front of guests, yet become impatient when the same question is repeated at home. They may want everyone to know how close they are to their mother, yet stop listening when their schedule is

not cancel children’s rights or obligatory maintenance.

³¹ **The cave: kindness towards parents.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith 2743.

Narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar. The man waited for his parents to wake before serving their milk, then prayed to Allah through this deed done for Him. The encouragement of parental kindness does not cancel children’s rights or obligatory maintenance.

full. The concern is not a display to perfect. It is a right to fulfil when people see and when they do not.

Caring may also be easy and enjoyable. That is a blessing, not something that diminishes the deed. You do not need to wish for hardship before the kindness can matter. Love your parents, enjoy their company, and hope for reward. If tiredness or frustration comes, ask Allah for help rather than allowing it to become mistreatment.

A family can cooperate in care. One child should not be left carrying more than they can bear and then blamed for asking for help. Visits, appointments, and expenses can be arranged clearly. We seek reward through service while also respecting those who share it. The quietest person should not automatically receive every burden.

If your parent forgets what you did, do not let that make you forget for whose sake you did it. Age or illness may have changed things. You need to learn what helps, obtain support where possible, and ask Allah honestly for strength. Your Lord does not need the public to hear the full account of your tiredness before He knows it.

Protect dignity as you provide care. A parent's weakness or illness is not material to display as proof of your devotion. You may share necessary information to obtain treatment or assistance, but not expose what would embarrass them without a right to do so. Protect them from harm through images and words as you protect them from discomfort you can relieve.

If your parents have died and you remember failings, regret is not all that remains. Repent, pray for them, and fulfil any remaining rights in the proper way. You cannot return to the past, but you can be truthful in what comes next. Allah's mercy is too great for remorse to become a reason to abandon all the good still possible.

The hadith does not tell us that the man knew he would one day need this deed in a cave. Do not turn worship into a purchase of safety from every hardship. We obey because Allah is our Lord, call upon Him as He has taught us, and hope for relief. We do not dictate its form or timing.

Your nearest share of the story may be a call you keep delaying, a need you know about but have not attended to, or a harsh response you could replace with gentleness. Do not wait for a cave to discover the worth of what is already before you. There is care to give now, and an intention to put right now. Allah knows what you offer even when no one hears its story.

26. The Men in the Cave: Turning Away from Sin

Another of the men remembered a female cousin whom he loved. He had tried to persuade her into an unlawful relationship, and she had refused. Later, hardship brought her to him. He gave her one hundred and twenty dinars on condition that she submit to him. Her need had become, in his hands, an opportunity for something forbidden.³²

When he was able to proceed, she told him that he had no right to do so except through a lawful bond. He stopped, withdrew, and left her the money, although his attachment to her remained. He asked Allah to relieve them if he had done this seeking His countenance. The rock moved further, but they still could not leave.³³

The beginning of this episode was not an example of good conduct. His purpose had been wrong. The lesson is in returning when reminded of Allah and His limits. He did not use the money already spent as a reason to continue, or treat the strength of his desire as permission for what was unlawful.

We must call exploitation of need an injustice, not turn it into a romantic story. Another person's vulnerability does not permit us to take what Allah has forbidden. Money does not purchase the surrender of dignity or rights. Help someone properly where you can, or honestly decline what you cannot provide. Do not make

³²**The cave: turning away from sexual wrongdoing.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hiring, chapter 12, hadith 2272.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. This version specifies 120 dinars given to the man's cousin; he then abandoned the unlawful act and left the money with her. Details differ between versions of the cave account and should not be combined carelessly.

³³**The cave: turning away from sexual wrongdoing.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hiring, chapter 12, hadith 2272.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. This version specifies 120 dinars given to the man's cousin; he then abandoned the unlawful act and left the money with her. Details differ between versions of the cave account and should not be combined carelessly.

their need a means of pressure.

The man's return also opens hope for someone who has begun badly. You may already be partway down a wrong path when a reminder reaches you. You do not have to finish because you have gone so far, because withdrawing is embarrassing, or because you have spent time and money. You can stop at the boundary you now recognise and choose the right next step.

Advice may come from someone you did not expect to advise you: a younger person, someone with less money, or someone under your authority. Truth does not become less true because its speaker is vulnerable. When they say what you know is right, do not use your power over them as a reason to reject it.

The lesson reaches beyond one kind of temptation. Someone may demand a private benefit from a person who needs their signature, make help conditional on an unlawful relationship, or use a secret to force someone into something they do not want. Allah is not absent from the place where a person believes their power leaves them unanswerable.

Repentance must include stopping the harm itself. It is not enough to withdraw an improper request while keeping the pressure in place. Do not make silence about a secret another favour for which you demand payment. Do not require the person you wronged to reassure you that you are still a good person. Put right what you owe and protect their right to safety and freedom from your harm.

Chastity can be difficult. The presence of desire does not make every refusal dishonest. A person may want something and still choose to fear Allah and leave it. That effort needs His help. Its difficulty is neither permission to continue in the forbidden nor proof that improvement is impossible.

Protect your decision through practical means. Do not return to contact that repeatedly opens the same door while claiming you are testing your strength. Do not keep an easy route back to sin and then wonder why you weaken again. Move away from a cause you know affects you and seek appropriate help when needed.

There is no need to seek a great temptation in order to create an impressive story of resisting it. Safety is better, and an early refusal is easier. Your good decision may be keeping a working relationship clear, avoiding unlawful seclusion,

or leaving unsaid a sentence you know will lead further. Danger need not reach its peak before avoiding it has value.

If returning to what is right costs you an advantage, do not make that loss the only measure of your choice. Money you have no lawful right to is not a good to preserve at any price. A position that survives only through injustice needs reconsideration. Ask Allah for provision and recompense rather than treating the ability to obtain something forbidden as a justification for obtaining it.

The man did not pray by claiming he had never been weak. He remembered a return in which he chose to leave sin for Allah. This brings us towards repentance without minimising the wrong. We acknowledge it, leave it, regret it, and uphold the rights of those affected, then hope that Allah accepts our return.

There may be something you can leave today, made difficult precisely because it is within your reach. Remember that refraining can itself be a deed when it is for Allah. People do not record every wrong you chose not to do. Your Lord knows the choice. Ask His help, make the decision, and do not bargain away a limit you know because desire has not yet disappeared.

27. The Men in the Cave: The Worker's Wages

One of the men had employed a worker in return for a measure of rice. The worker left without taking it. The employer planted that rice, and its proceeds grew until he purchased cattle. After some time, the worker returned to ask for his original payment.³⁴

He expected only the modest amount he had earned. The employer told him to take the cattle. The worker thought he was being mocked: how could all of this be payment for that small measure of rice? The man assured him that he was serious and that the cattle had come from the proceeds of his wages. The worker took

³⁴ **The cave: preserving a worker's wages.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, chapter 53, hadith 3465.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. In this version the worker's wage was rice, which the employer cultivated until its proceeds became cattle, then handed over to the worker. These details differ from the wording of other versions.

them and left.³⁵

In the cave, the man mentioned this action and asked for relief if he had done it out of fear of Allah. The narrations of the cave bring together the three men's prayers until Allah frees them and they leave.^{36 37 38} Care for parents, restraint from sin, and protection of a worker's right are different deeds joined by seeking Him.

A trust is tested when its owner is absent. They are not watching their property, may not know what has happened to it, and may struggle to prove their claim. Does their right remain safe with the person holding it, or does absence become an opportunity to take what is not theirs?

We need this question in ordinary accounts: money its owner forgot paying, an overpayment received by mistake, an item whose loan period has ended, or a personal expense that could be hidden in workplace costs. The amount may seem small, but trustworthiness does not begin above a financial threshold. What is not yours does not become yours because someone failed to notice.

The story is not general permission to invest other people's money without authority. Different property arrangements and agreements have their own rulings, and using an entrusted sum may be prohibited. Do not expose someone's deposit to risk while saying you intend to increase it for them. The lesson is to protect rights

³⁵**The cave: preserving a worker's wages.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, chapter 53, hadith 3465.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. In this version the worker's wage was rice, which the employer cultivated until its proceeds became cattle, then handed over to the worker. These details differ from the wording of other versions.

³⁶**The cave: turning away from sexual wrongdoing.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hiring, chapter 12, hadith 2272.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. This version specifies 120 dinars given to the man's cousin; he then abandoned the unlawful act and left the money with her. Details differ between versions of the cave account and should not be combined carelessly.

³⁷**The cave: preserving a worker's wages.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, chapter 53, hadith 3465.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. In this version the worker's wage was rice, which the employer cultivated until its proceeds became cattle, then handed over to the worker. These details differ from the wording of other versions.

³⁸**The cave: kindness towards parents.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith 2743.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. The man waited for his parents to wake before serving their milk, then prayed to Allah through this deed done for Him. The encouragement of parental kindness does not cancel children's rights or obligatory maintenance.

and not seize the benefit belonging to an absent person. A financial transaction still requires its proper ruling.

It can be easy to take a little because we think the owner will not miss it. Their rights are not measured by our opinion of their wealth. They may be rich and their money still unlawful for us to take. The sum may be small and the trust still clear. Here sincerity means obeying Allah before a threat or demand arrives.

When returning a right, do not present it as though you were giving away your own property. The owner may thank you for your honesty, but you have not bought their silence about your faults or their lifelong loyalty. Saying that you could have withheld it does not make refraining from injustice a right to humiliate them. You fulfil what you owe and hope for reward for keeping the trust.

The owner may be unpleasant: demanding, harsh, or suspicious. You can answer unfair treatment appropriately and explain what protects you. Their money, however, is not conditional on your liking their character. Do not let anger become a reason for deliberate delay or an unauthorised deduction.

Some trusts are not kept in a box. A confidential word, private information, or a complaint shared in search of help may be in your keeping. The person leaves, and an opportunity arises to impress others with what you know. Not every fact you possess is yours to publish. A gathering's interest does not remove the owner's right to privacy.

Clear records support trustworthiness. Write down what needs recording, keep accurate accounts, and define the limits of authority. A good heart is not a substitute for procedures that protect people from forgetting or dispute. You may be honest today and forget tomorrow. Someone taking over your role may need to know what is owed. Careful organisation belongs to fulfilling responsibility well.

If you discover that you took something you had no right to, begin restoring it. Do not wait for a more moving reminder before acting. You may need advice about how to return it or find the owner, but the first honest step is acknowledging the right and working towards it. Uncertainty about part of the process does not permit continuing the wrong.

The man in the account did not need the worker's supervision to preserve his

payment. We can ask the same of ourselves: Is the trust fulfilled because Allah commanded it, or only because a breach might be discovered? Good systems are important, and we still need hearts that fear Him. A sincere heart will also welcome the systems that protect rights.

Do not wait for property as substantial as the cattle in the story. Look at what you hold today: a borrowed object, money to return, information to keep private, or time you have undertaken to give. Fulfil that trust honestly. People may never know what you could have concealed. Allah knows, and His pleasure is what you seek.

28. A Hidden Gift and an Honest Tear

The Prophet described seven kinds of people whom Allah will shade on the Day when there is no shade but His. Among them are someone who gives so secretly that the left hand does not know what the right hand spends, and someone who remembers Allah alone and whose eyes overflow with tears.³⁹ A donation reaches its recipient quietly; a person remembers their Lord away from people's attention.

Hidden charity teaches the heart that help can arrive without the giver becoming better known. No one's opinion of them may change. The recipient may not even know their name. They still want the help to reach its destination, because the One from whom they seek reward already knows the deed and needs no one to report it.

You may be able to help through a trustworthy intermediary or place money where it reaches someone entitled to it without an announcement. Make sure the means are sound and the delivery reliable. Then practise letting the gift be complete without listening for its public response. The aim is not to create an unsolvable mystery. It is to give with a good purpose that does not require applause.

Necessary knowledge held by an employee or intermediary does not make se-

³⁹ **Hidden charity and tears in private.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 16, hadith 1423.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Among the seven sheltered by Allah are a person who conceals charity and one who remembers Him alone until tears flow. The hadith states the virtue of the deeds; it does not certify everyone displaying their outward signs.

crecy meaningless. You may need a receipt or a statement to someone who entrusted you with funds. Other people's right to accurate records does not oppose your intention. Resist the wish to be noticed, not the care needed for honest accounts.

The same hadith also mentions a just leader, a young person raised in worship, and people whose love is for Allah. Sincerity therefore cannot be confined to isolation or withdrawal from public work. Your obedience may be among people and need truthfulness there just as it does in solitude. Hidden deeds are a great opportunity, not the only opportunity.

The person whose eyes filled with tears was not displaying them to anyone. Remembering Allah moved the heart. Reading of this favour should make us long for attentiveness to Him, not for tears we manufacture to reassure ourselves about our own spiritual image.

You may sit to remember Allah and become occupied with monitoring emotion: Why am I not crying? Is my heart hard? Soon you are more attentive to your eyes than to the words you are saying. Try to understand the remembrance and worship Him through it. If tears do not come, do not make them the sole test by which you judge yourself. Correct known heedlessness and ask Allah to give life to your heart.

A tear does not excuse leaving conduct unchanged. Someone may be moved by a reminder and continue harming another person in a way they recognise. We hope tenderness will lead to repentance, mercy, and honesty. Remembrance is meant to draw us closer to obedience, not merely provide a feeling we keep trying to repeat without repairing what follows it.

Self-admiration can enter a hidden deed too. A person imagines how much more highly people would think of them if they knew, and repeatedly enjoys that imagined reaction. A passing thought they dislike need not cause panic. But do not keep entertaining it. A private kindness should not become a performance before an audience continually imagined within the self.

If you keep some worship private, do not look down on someone whose work is visible. You do not know their intention. They may have a responsibility or a

sound reason to act publicly. Loving hidden worship does not require accusing others. Attend to what is between you and Allah without building your own virtue upon their supposed faults.

Your action may become known without your planning it. A child sees you praying, a relative learns you helped someone, or a recipient speaks gratefully of you. You need not panic or lie to deny it. Renew your intention, answer truthfully where necessary, and do not deliberately expand the story to make the most of a chance for praise.

You may also need someone to share a private good you can no longer sustain alone: caring for an ill person or supporting a need beyond your resources. Secrecy should not lead to injustice towards yourself or the loss of help that could continue through cooperation. Work for Allah within your ability, rather than protecting a private image that never allows you to ask for support.

Choose a sound act of worship that suits your circumstances, large or small, and make it for Him. It may be prayer for another person, charity, or remembrance at a quiet time. Do not burden yourself with what you cannot maintain or attach an unestablished number or promised merit to it. A small, well-performed and continuing deed is an opportunity for good.⁴⁰

A hidden donation and an honest tear remind us that Allah's knowledge is enough. People do not need to know everything we do. Their ignorance leaves no gap in His knowledge. Worship Him when you are alone, be mindful of Him when you go among others, and ask for sincerity that accompanies both.

29. When Charity Does Not Go as Expected

A man resolved to give charity. He went out and, without knowing it, placed the gift in the hands of a thief. The next morning, people spoke about the charity given to a thief. He praised Allah and decided to give again. This time the money

⁴⁰ **Aiming rightly and remaining consistent.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations, chapter 18, hadith 6464.

Narrated by 'A'ishah. The Prophet urges right effort and describes the most beloved deeds as those that continue, even if small. Effort does not make Allah's favour unnecessary, and maintaining small voluntary acts does not excuse abandoning an obligation.

reached a woman engaged in unlawful sexual activity.⁴¹

People talked about that the following morning too. He praised Allah and went out a third time, then gave to a wealthy person. Again the news spread. Things had not turned out as someone expects when setting out to place money in the hands of a person in need.⁴²

He was then told of a possibility he had not considered: perhaps the thief would refrain from stealing, perhaps the woman would leave her sin, and perhaps the rich person would take a lesson and spend from what Allah had given him. The Prophet related this account, which reminds us that the result visible to us is not the whole of the good that may come.⁴³

This is not a reason to stop making enquiries. Someone paying zakat must attend to who is entitled to receive it. Someone entrusted with funds for a stated purpose may not spend them however they wish. An error after reasonable care differs from deliberate negligence, and a good intention does not validate every financial decision. Yet an outcome different from our expectation is not, by itself, proof that no good came of the action.

You may work to help a student and not see the success you hoped for at the expected time. You may offer a kindness without learning what the recipient did with it. Review your approach and learn from the result, but do not make your own prediction the only measure of every kindness's worth.

The account also leaves room for mercy towards someone who has sinned without excusing the sin. The thief needs to leave theft; the woman needs to leave the unlawful act. Help may support such a change. We do not claim that the two

⁴¹ **Charity reaching a thief, an adulteress, and a wealthy person.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 14, hadith 1421.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The possible benefits are expressed with "perhaps." The report does not establish that every recipient actually changed their conduct afterwards.

⁴² **Charity reaching a thief, an adulteress, and a wealthy person.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 14, hadith 1421.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The possible benefits are expressed with "perhaps." The report does not establish that every recipient actually changed their conduct afterwards.

⁴³ **Charity reaching a thief, an adulteress, and a wealthy person.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 14, hadith 1421.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The possible benefits are expressed with "perhaps." The report does not establish that every recipient actually changed their conduct afterwards.

actually changed, because the report does not supply those later details. We learn not to despair of a wrongdoer's possible return.

A giver may silently require qualities that have little to do with eligibility and much to do with an ideal picture of poverty. The recipient must never err, never offend the giver's tastes, and always know how to express thanks. We must distinguish legitimate care in giving from waiting for a perfect person before showing mercy.

Need does not stop someone being human, with their own temperament and faults. Nor does a fault permit helping them continue in sin. We can choose a sound form of assistance, offer advice gently, and look for a less harmful means. We should not withhold every good simply because the person needing it has not become everything we would like.

After giving, you may hear mockery or criticism. Some of it may contain useful information; some may be needless cruelty. Accept sound correction without allowing ridicule alone to define your view of the deed. You can say, "I wanted good, and I will be more careful next time," without deciding to stop giving altogether.

Praising Allah does not prevent admitting a mistake. You can thank Him, apologise for a failing, improve a procedure, and ask what should be done now. Do not use a good intention as a barrier against learning. A person with a worthy purpose should be particularly ready to receive information that makes the work better.

At the same time, do not demand an impossible guarantee before every kindness. After reasonable care, some facts will remain unknown. You cannot inspect every recipient's heart or control the rest of their life. Be mindful of Allah in what is within your reach, fulfil the trust, and hope for good from what you offered.

You may receive neither a thank-you message nor a story showing the donation's effect. If you took care with its destination and delivered it, a lack of news does not establish insincerity. Allah knows where it went and why you gave. Follow up where needed for learning and accountability without treating the recipient's whole life as open to you because they accepted help.

The wealthy recipient also offers a reminder to those who have resources. Seeing a modest kindness from someone else may awaken you to what you could do. Do

not dismiss an example because its giver has less money or experience. They may remind you of a good you knew about and then neglected.

Give with care, review without pride, and hope without making unsupported claims. If things do not unfold as expected, the road has not necessarily ended. A method may need correction, or some good may exist that you cannot see. Leave what you do not know to Allah and continue in the obedience you do know.

30. A Guest in an Ansari Home

A man came to the Prophet, who sent to his wives looking for food for him. They had only water. The Messenger of Allah asked who would take the man in as a guest. A man from the Ansar offered to do so and brought him home.⁴⁴

He asked his wife to honour the Messenger's guest. She told him that they had only the children's food. She prepared it, settled the children to sleep, and lit the lamp. Then, appearing to adjust it, she put it out. The couple made their guest think they were eating with him while they themselves went hungry.⁴⁵

The next morning the Ansari came to the Prophet and learned of the divine praise for what they had done. The report connects their action with the verse: "They give others preference over themselves, even though they are in need." [Qur'an 59:9]⁴⁶

This was a household in need, yet it honoured a guest. What brings the story close to sincerity is that the guest was not required to witness the full extent of

⁴⁴**The Ansari couple and their guest.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Helpers, chapter 10, hadith 3798.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The account includes limited food, settling the children, extinguishing the lamp, and giving preference to the guest. The verse on selfless preference in Surah al-Hashr appears in the report. It is not general permission to neglect obligatory maintenance.

⁴⁵**The Ansari couple and their guest.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Helpers, chapter 10, hadith 3798.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The account includes limited food, settling the children, extinguishing the lamp, and giving preference to the guest. The verse on selfless preference in Surah al-Hashr appears in the report. It is not general permission to neglect obligatory maintenance.

⁴⁶**The Ansari couple and their guest.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Helpers, chapter 10, hadith 3798.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The account includes limited food, settling the children, extinguishing the lamp, and giving preference to the guest. The verse on selfless preference in Surah al-Hashr appears in the report. It is not general permission to neglect obligatory maintenance.

their sacrifice. The lamp went out, the food reached him, and his meal did not become a gathering in which he had to hear everything his hosts had endured for him.

Our abilities and circumstances differ. The account does not give us permission to neglect obligatory provision or harm children. It is an event praised by revelation, through which we learn generosity and care for a guest's dignity while remaining bound by the rules of rights and capacity. Giving preference is not praiseworthy when it discards a right that is not ours to waive.

The wife's work is visible in the account alongside her husband's. She prepared, settled the children, extinguished the lamp, and shared the hunger. We should not tell stories of generosity as though only the person who appears publicly did the work. Sincerity does not need to erase someone else's effort to make the better-known person seem larger.

How often are guests welcomed, the host thanked, and little attention given to those who cooked, prepared the room, and carried the practical demands? The person receiving the thanks should recognise and appreciate this work and share it where possible. Buying admiration from guests through exhaustion at home, then denying the contribution of one's family, is not complete generosity.

Someone responsible for preparation may need to explain their capacity beforehand. There may not be enough time, or additional help may be necessary. Saying so does not oppose sincerity. Clarity before agreeing is kinder than outward agreement followed by anger that everyone at home must endure.

A guest also has responsibilities. Do not ask for what is difficult, compare the home unfavourably with others, or turn hospitality into an inspection of furniture and the number of dishes. Receive the kindness gratefully. Familiarity does not give unlimited rights over another person's time and effort.

Simple hospitality may be more honest than excess. A modest meal from lawful money, a welcoming face, and considerate conversation are better than extravagance whose only purpose is to be called unsurpassed. Neither the size of a table nor the smallness of a home measures sincerity. We ask about intention and the soundness of what was done.

A completed kindness can be spoiled by rehearsing its cost. You tell the guest everything delayed for them and every burden your family carried until they regret coming. If the next visit needs better arrangements, explain that gently. Do not turn a meal already offered into an endless demand for apologies and thanks.

What the Prophet was told about the couple reminds us that Allah knew what the guest did not fully see. We do not need a guarantee that every hidden kindness will eventually be discovered before trusting that it is known to Him. People may learn of it or never learn of it. Nothing changes in His knowledge.

There are forms of preferring others that do not require manufactured hardship. You can give up something beyond your own needs, make time for a person in difficulty, or lawfully let someone with greater need go first. The moment need not be dramatic for you to resist a desire and seek Allah's pleasure.

When you remember the house in which the lamp was put out, remember both its practical generosity and the dignity preserved for the guest. Try to let your kindness contain both within your ability: genuine benefit, fairness towards those helping you, and a purpose that does not burden the recipient with an account of every cost.

31. Abu Talhah's Most Beloved Property

Abu Talhah owned substantial date-palm property in Madinah. His dearest possession was Bayruha, a garden opposite the mosque, which the Prophet used to enter and drink from its pleasant water. When Allah revealed, "You will not attain righteousness until you spend from what you love," Abu Talhah went to the Messenger of Allah. [Qur'an 3:92]⁴⁷

He explained that Bayruha was the property he loved most and that he was giving it as charity for Allah, hoping for its goodness and reward with Him. He asked the Prophet to place it where Allah directed him. The Prophet praised the

⁴⁷ **Abu Talhah's garden.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 44, hadith 1461.

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik. Abu Talhah gave Bayruha' after the revelation concerning giving from what one loves. The Prophet directed him to distribute it among his relatives.

gift and advised him to give it to his relatives. Abu Talhah did so, distributing it among his relatives and cousins.⁴⁸

The gift was still loved. It was not something its owner had already lost interest in. Abu Talhah heard the verse and responded with something dear to him. He did not stop at admiring the meaning or postpone its effect until the property no longer mattered to him.

We may find it easy to give away what we no longer need. That can still benefit others and has its place. The verse asks us to consider more: can we give from something we value when doing so is lawful and within our means? We are not asked to hate what we own, but not to let love of it prevent obedience to Allah.

The story does not tell us to give away every beloved possession without considering rights. A debt or necessary provision may come first. In your circumstances, retaining money for your family may be the duty. Learn the ruling before acting, and do not let enthusiasm cause a decision you later regret because it neglected a trust. Giving sincerely should be accompanied by understanding how to give rightly.

Notice that Abu Talhah asked the Prophet where to direct the charity. His strong desire to do good did not make guidance unnecessary. We may possess money and a good intention while still needing advice about the most useful way to spend it.

The Prophet directed him towards relatives. A need you search for far away may already be present close to home. Familiarity does not make a relative's need unimportant, and novelty does not automatically make a gift more worthy. Attend to what Allah has prescribed and where the need lies, then choose a sound and beneficial destination.

Giving to relatives has its own tests. They may disagree with you, know parts of your life a stranger does not, or fail to praise you on every occasion. Do not use kindness to buy their agreement. If you give, give properly. If you lend, make the right clear. Do not leave the relationship governed by hidden conditions the other

⁴⁸ **Abu Talhah's garden.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 44, hadith 1461.

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik. Abu Talhah gave Bayruha' after the revelation concerning giving from what one loves. The Prophet directed him to distribute it among his relatives.

person never understood.

Something offered for Allah should not later become a threat. Repeatedly telling a recipient that this was your most beloved possession may spoil their ability to enjoy it. When the fact genuinely needs mentioning, state it truthfully in its place. Do not make the size of your sacrifice a weapon in every disagreement.

Abu Talhah hoped for the gift's goodness and reward with Allah. Such hope does not oppose sincerity. He gave for Allah and wanted what was with Him. A giver does not need to stop hoping for Paradise and acceptance to be truthful. What must not become the purpose of worship is human praise.

You may not own a garden, but you have somewhere to begin: a little money, a useful item, a skill with which to serve, or time that can be offered properly. Do not let the scale of the story hide the possible lesson. You are asked to use what you can, not to manufacture an episode that matches another person's wealth.

When you make a sound commitment to give, take care to fulfil it. A verse or hadith may move you into a promise, then enthusiasm cools. Do not promise beyond your capacity. But do attend to a commitment properly made. Let the giving be more truthful than the announcement, rather than leaving the announcement as its finest part.

If you discover a strong attachment to something you love, do not turn away from the discovery. There may be stinginess to resist, or a genuine need to protect. Distinguish them with knowledge and honesty. Not every concern is miserliness, and not every refusal is wisdom. Ask someone whose understanding you trust when the difference is unclear.

Bayruha is more than the name of property in this account. It is an example of hearing followed by action. A believer hears the Lord's command, learns its place, and responds. Seek a share of that response in your own life, without recklessness or hurtful reminders, hoping that what you give is for Allah alone.

32. Abu Bakr: A Day Filled with Good

The Messenger of Allah asked his companions, “Who among you is fasting today?” Abu Bakr answered that he was. The Prophet then asked who had followed a funeral that day, fed a person in need, and visited someone ill. Each time, Abu Bakr replied that he had.⁴⁹

The Prophet said: “These deeds do not come together in a person without that person entering Paradise.”⁵⁰ It was a day in which acts of worship and kindness came together, and the Prophet described their virtue. We are not given a detailed account of each visit or gift. What is established is enough to show the breadth of the good Abu Bakr had done.

Fasting is restraint for Allah. Following a funeral fulfils a right and reminds us of the Hereafter. Feeding someone brings practical relief. Visiting the sick offers company and care. These different opportunities do not need to cancel one another for a life to be lived for Allah.

Concern for the heart must not diminish the value of deeds. Look at this day: faith led to fasting, feeding, visiting, and accompanying a funeral. We hope what is in the heart will appear in obedience and mercy, not remain a claim by which we excuse ourselves from effort.

Abu Bakr’s replies teach something else. People learning of his work was not, in itself, a fault. He was asked and answered. Sincerity does not require refusing every explanation even when a response is appropriate. Mentioning a deed can serve teaching, encouragement, or testimony. Its doer still attends to a truthful purpose.

The hadith does not tell us that Abu Bakr wanted to list his virtues before people.

⁴⁹ **Abu Bakr’s day of good deeds.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Zakat, hadith 1028.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Abu Bakr combined fasting, accompanying a funeral, feeding a person in need, and visiting someone ill on the day described. The Prophet stated the great promise for the person in whom these deeds come together.

⁵⁰ **Abu Bakr’s day of good deeds.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Zakat, hadith 1028.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Abu Bakr combined fasting, accompanying a funeral, feeding a person in need, and visiting someone ill on the day described. The Prophet stated the great promise for the person in whom these deeds come together.

What it gives us is a question from the Prophet and an answer. We should not turn our fear of showing off into a rule that prevents what the Sunnah allows. There is a virtue in secrecy and a place for disclosure; in both, we care for intention.

We may narrow goodness to one practice we enjoy. Someone performs a beloved voluntary act repeatedly while overlooking a nearby person they could help. Another gives generously to people while neglecting worship. The variety of this day widens our attention without requiring us to reproduce every part of it every day.

Nor should the prophetic promise become a set of boxes we tick to pronounce ourselves guaranteed Paradise. We believe the promise, attend to the deeds with their conditions and rights, and hope for acceptance. We do not make a sick person a prop for completing a list. They need real kindness at an appropriate time.

Visiting someone ill means considering their condition: not staying too long, asking embarrassing questions, or publicising their illness without a right. Feeding someone requires lawful money and good treatment. Every good deed carries a trust; its name alone is not enough.

Your day may contain clear, modest opportunities while you keep waiting for perfect free time. You imagine becoming kinder when responsibilities lessen, money increases, or the right mood arrives. Meanwhile, a merciful word, an affordable donation, or a call to a relative passes by. Do not let an imagined future prevent the good already within reach.

This does not mean filling your day until you neglect duties or exhaust everyone around you. Your present responsibility may be remaining with a patient who cannot be left or completing work entrusted to you. Do not replace a binding right with a variety of voluntary acts that looks more impressive. Learn to put responsibilities in order. Take willingness from the hadith, not agitation.

When you read of Abu Bakr's virtue, do not suppose that goodness ended with those who came before us. We love them, recognise their precedence, and learn what we can from their example. We do not claim their rank by resembling a few outward actions. Yet the distance between us should not become a reason to refuse every possible form of following them.

Ask which nearby need you can meet today. Perhaps the more necessary question

is: Which obligation am I postponing while adding to a voluntary act I enjoy? Begin where you recognise the need for repair. Not every action needs announcing, and not every appropriate announcement should be paralysed by fear. Fulfil your place faithfully and hope for what is with Allah.

A fast, a funeral, a person in need, someone ill: a few words in the report, and real deeds in a real day. This is how we hope sincerity will grow, bringing us nearer to our Lord and improving how we treat His servants. We ask Him for truthful hearts and willingness to do good, without allowing a deed to seem better merely because people speak well of us for it.

Part Five: What Undermines Sincerity

We may begin a good deed hoping for Allah’s pleasure, then find ourselves wanting people to notice it or speak about us. Or we may become so impressed by what we have done that we forget how much we owe to His help. We need to recognise these faults so that we can put them right—not so that we become afraid of every act of worship and abandon it. Recognising a wrong gives us something to repent of. Asking Allah for help does not remove our need to work on ourselves.

Showing off concerns what we want people to see. Seeking a reputation concerns what we want them to hear about us. Self-admiration concerns how we regard ourselves and our achievements. These faults may occur together, or we may struggle with one more than another. Either way, there is still good for us to do, a heart to care for, and a Lord to whom we can return. We need not be deceived by praise or driven to despair by our shortcomings.

33. “And So It Was Said”

The Prophet told of a man who fought until he was killed, another who learned, taught, and recited the Qur’an, and a third whom Allah had given wealth and who spent it generously. People would consider these great deeds. Their outward form involved effort, time, and sacrifice. Yet the account reveals what the men had wanted from them. An impressive deed does not make a false intention sincere.⁵¹

⁵¹ **Among the first to be judged.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1905.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The account concerns fighting to be called brave, learning and reciting to be called learned and accomplished, and spending to be called generous. Its warning about intention does not authorise identifying particular people’s hidden motives.

The first man is brought forward on the Day of Judgement. Allah reminds him of His blessings, which the man acknowledges, and asks what he did with them. The man says that he fought for Allah until he was martyred. He is told that this was not true: he fought so that people would call him brave, “and so it was said.” He is then cast into the Fire. The praise he sought had already reached him. It could not help him when he stood before his Lord.

The man who learned, taught, and recited the Qur’an also claims that he did so for Allah. He is told that he learned to be called a scholar and recited to be called a reciter—and so it was said. The wealthy man claims that he spent for Allah, but is told that he did so to be called generous—and so it was said. The narration describes a severe punishment for each of them.⁵²

Those few words deserve our attention. We can become so eager for something to be said about us that we accept it as the reward for long efforts. We hear our name praised and feel that we have achieved what we wanted. Meanwhile, the more important question remains: did we want Allah’s pleasure, and did we act in a way that pleases Him?

The hadith does not condemn knowledge, recitation, or giving. It warns us against using these acts of worship to seek a reputation. Our response should therefore be to correct our purpose within the good work, not abandon the good work itself. We read to be guided, learn so that we can practise and teach, and give out of devotion to Allah and compassion for His servants. Then we ask Him to accept it.

Nor is the warning only for those with large audiences. A person known to very few people may alter a prayer to impress one observer. Another may do a kindness only to win the admiration of someone dear to them. The issue is the purpose, not the size of the audience or the amount of wealth available.

Consider the choices you make. One task may meet a real need while offering little recognition; another may be less useful but bring more praise. Choosing the

⁵² **Among the first to be judged.**

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Leadership, hadith 1905.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The account concerns fighting to be called brave, learning and reciting to be called learned and accomplished, and spending to be called generous. Its warning about intention does not authorise identifying particular people’s hidden motives.

visible task is not automatically wrong. It may suit your abilities better, or its need may be greater than you first thought. But when you know that you rejected the more useful work solely because it would not make you known, you have found something to correct.

Students encounter this test in ordinary ways. You can ask a question because you need to understand, or because you want everyone to know that you already understand it. You can explain what the listener needs, or bury them in details to display your learning. Neither situation requires you to stop studying or teaching. It asks you to place the learner's need ahead of your wish to appear knowledgeable.

Giving has its own tests. A donor may think more about who will hear of the gift than whether it reaches the person who needs it. Someone else may feel embarrassed to offer a small amount publicly, although that same amount could be given quietly. Do not despise what you can afford, and do not burden yourself with what you cannot afford simply to be called generous. Give lawfully, and seek Allah's acceptance.

None of this gives us permission to decide what lies in the heart of a particular scholar, reciter, or donor. Allah knows what they conceal. We do not know another person's private purpose merely because their work is public. We examine what we know about ourselves, advise others about an identifiable wrong, and do not turn this warning into an accusation against everyone with whom we disagree.

It is a mercy that we hear the warning while repentance is still possible. There is time to correct an intention, restore a right, and do something for Allah. We do not have to defend every part of our past. We need to be honest about what we can repair now and ask forgiveness for the shortcomings we recognise and those we have overlooked.

Tomorrow, people may praise you or say nothing at all. Do not let that difference decide whether you continue obeying Allah. Be grateful for the good you have been enabled to do, receive sound advice, and improve what you can. When praise comes, ask your Lord to accept the deed. That is what we will need when people's words have ended and we meet Allah with what we have done.

34. When We Work to Be Seen

Showing off in worship—*riya'*—means performing an act of devotion so that people will see it and praise or admire us. A person may pray, recite the Qur'an, or give charity while seeking a place in other people's estimation. The action looks like obedience, but its purpose is their approval. Caring for the intention is therefore part of caring for the worship itself, not an optional concern to consider afterwards.

In the sacred hadith, Allah declares that He has no need of a partner: whoever does a deed associating someone else with Him in it is left with that association.⁵³ We need His mercy and acceptance; He has no need of us or our deeds. We should not make the worship He commanded us to devote to Him a means of securing someone's admiration.

Sometimes a person knows quite clearly that they would not have done the deed without an audience. At other times, the desire enters after a sincere beginning. They are reciting, then notice someone whose approval matters to them and deliberately change their performance to attract it. Once we recognise such a purpose, we need to resist it and return to the worship we intended for Allah.

Yet other people's presence does not establish showing off. We pray in congregation, learn together, and give openly when there is a reason to do so. Someone's presence may remind us to perform an action more carefully rather than make us seek their praise. We cannot call every increase in effort around others insincere. We must look honestly at what we actually know of our own purpose.

A passing thought is also different from an intention we choose. It may occur to you that someone can see you, and you dislike becoming concerned with them and return to your prayer. Do not make that thought a reason to repeat or abandon the prayer. Resisting a corrupt purpose is not the same as accepting it. Ibn Rajab explains the distinction between an intrusive desire to show off that is resisted and one that is indulged.⁵⁴

⁵³ **Devoting worship to Allah.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 2985.

A sacred hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah concerning a deed in which someone else is associated with Allah. It addresses the purpose adopted in worship, not every unwanted thought a servant resists.

⁵⁴ **The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

One helpful response is to attend to the worship itself. As you recite, try to understand the words. As you pray, remember before whom you stand. As you give, attend to the need of the person receiving help. This does not make anyone immune to showing off, but it gives the heart a sound purpose to return to whenever admiration begins to distract it.

A private act of worship may help as well: a prayer when you are alone, charity without your name attached, or a kindness you do not later describe. Your entire life need not become a secret. The point is to have some good that does not wait to be discovered. Do not then make that hidden deed a conversation about how well you hide your deeds.

Notice what feeds your need to be seen. Do you repeatedly check comments after every contribution? Do you keep asking what people said about you? Reduce whatever unnecessarily keeps your attention there. You may not need to leave a useful platform altogether. It may be enough to use it for a clear purpose and return to the work rather than remain waiting for approval.

In public worship, avoid additions that you know are intended only to impress. Do not imply a depth of concentration you did not experience or adopt a manner calculated to suggest a religious life that is not yours. You can be truthful without exposing your faults. Honesty does not require you to disgrace yourself; it requires you not to manufacture a false account of yourself for others.

Where the work requires openness, provide it. Fundraising may require an account of money received and spent. Teaching may require people to know who is responsible and what that person is qualified to teach. Fulfilling a trust does not become showing off merely because the necessary information is public. Correct your intention, state what is needed, and leave out exaggeration that adds no benefit.

Nor should you explain every lack of energy when alone as evidence of insincerity. You may be tired or unwell; companionship may genuinely help you worship. Such situations call for understanding. Address a cause you can identify rather than

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

impose a verdict without grounds. At the same time, do not use ordinary changes in energy to excuse a deliberately corrupt purpose that you know is present.

When you recognise that you wanted praise, repent. Do not put off returning because the admission is uncomfortable, and do not conclude that you are unfit for worship. Change what you can, ask your Lord for help, and continue doing good. We need hearts that return after wrongdoing—not a claim that we have never gone wrong, and not a despair that keeps us from returning.

35. Wanting Them to Hear of Us

You may do a kindness privately, then feel an urge to make it known a few days later. Charity comes up in conversation, and you begin looking for a way to mention your gift. No one needs the information, but you would like a word about your generosity or devotion. This is the concern expressed by *sum'ah*: seeking praise and regard through what people hear of our deeds.

The Prophet warned that whoever makes a display of his deeds to be heard of, Allah will expose him, and whoever shows off, Allah will expose his showing off.⁵⁵ Worship is not a means of purchasing a fine reputation. A deed we intended for Allah needs honesty afterwards as well as at its beginning. Finishing the action does not end our need to care for the heart.

This does not forbid every account of something good. You may teach from experience, answer a question, give necessary testimony, or express gratitude for Allah's favour. What matters is the purpose and the way you speak. Share what benefits, keep the account truthful, and respect people's rights. A small useful point should not become an excuse for a long recital whose real purpose is self-praise.

Before telling the story, ask what the listener needs. Perhaps the lesson can be shared without mentioning how much you gave or how difficult it was. In another situation, the fuller experience may genuinely help. There is no single phrase that

⁵⁵ **Being seen and being spoken of.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations, chapter 36, hadith 6499.

Narrated by Jundub. The warning concerns making deeds known for praise and showing off. Seeking a reputation through worship differs from every useful or necessary account of a deed.

settles every case. We need honesty about what we know is making us speak.

Even accurate facts can be arranged to create an inaccurate impression. You mention staying at the mosque and allow someone to assume that you spent the night there. You describe a donation you delivered and let them believe that the money was yours. Once you realise that they have understood something that did not happen, do not preserve the misunderstanding because it flatters you. Explain the truth simply.

The same problem arises when the work of a group is told as the achievement of one person. One gave the money, another followed up, others carried the difficult tasks—and the speaker mentions only himself. Fairness requires us to preserve their share of the credit. You may enjoy a success you helped achieve and describe your actual contribution without reducing everyone else's.

Sometimes the account exposes the person we helped. We mention their debt, illness, or family trouble without permission, hoping to demonstrate the size of our kindness. A wish to encourage giving is not enough to justify revealing something they would hate to have known. Explain the general need, or seek permission where particular information is necessary. Leave private details alone when they add nothing except a cost to someone's dignity.

Imagine hearing about a person who helped several struggling families. You can be glad and pray for them. Or you may immediately want to say that you helped just as many—or more. Pause. Another person's good being mentioned does not make the moment a call for your own achievements. Let their kindness be appreciated. Yours is not lost because no one at the table knows about it.

If you have already begun speaking and recognise the wish for praise, you can shorten the account and correct it. You need not turn the gathering into a public examination of your motives. If you claimed what was not yours, make the truth clear. If you exposed something you had no right to reveal, do what you can to repair the harm, seek forgiveness, and learn to be more careful with your tongue.

We may also become accustomed to explaining our intentions after every deed: why we acted, why we kept it quiet, and how we resisted wanting attention. Private advice can help when we need guidance. But constant accounts of how carefully

we examine ourselves can become another way of asking to be admired. People do not have to know the effort you make against a fault for that effort to be sincere.

There is ease in being able to attend a gathering without being its subject. Listen, ask after others, appreciate their good, and speak when you have something useful to say. Your worth does not depend on your name being mentioned. Your kindness does not disappear because you did not describe it. Give others the attention you hope they would offer you, and seek Allah's reward in being a good companion.

When someone else tells of a good deed, do not rush to diagnose their intention. They may have a valid reason to explain it, and you do not know their circumstances as you know your own. If there is an identifiable lie or harm, address it. What the heart conceals is known to Allah. Looking after your own speech is more useful than guessing why everyone around you is speaking.

36. Admiring Our Own Deeds

It is good to feel grateful happiness when Allah enables you to do something right. You memorise part of the Qur'an, fulfil a trust, or help someone in need, and thank Him for His favour. But this happiness can turn into self-admiration: you begin treating the deed as proof of your own superiority, forget your need for Allah's help and forgiveness, and perhaps look down on those who have not done the same.

The difference between gratitude and self-admiration becomes clear in their effects. The grateful person acknowledges Allah's favour and asks Him to accept the deed. The self-impressed person feels increasingly satisfied with himself, as though correction were no longer necessary. He may never say this aloud. It becomes apparent when someone points out a fault or asks him to apologise for a right he has neglected.

Allah says, "Do not declare yourselves pure; He knows best who is mindful of Him." [Qur'an 53:32] We know some of what we have done, but do not know whether it has been accepted or how our lives will end. This calls for humility and a prayer for steadfastness. It does not ask us to deny every good thing or make claims about ourselves that we know are untrue.

The Prophet described arrogance as rejecting the truth and looking down on people.⁵⁶ A man had asked about liking fine clothes and fine shoes; the Prophet did not equate an appreciation of beauty with arrogance. A modest-looking appearance is therefore not a guarantee of humility. Someone in simple clothes may feel superior, while someone well dressed may be humble at heart.

Notice how you respond to advice from someone younger or less experienced. Their observation may be mistaken, and you may explain why. But when it is right, can you accept it? Or do you reject it because you consider yourself above being corrected by that person? Receiving the truth does not diminish your knowledge or experience. It prevents you from using them to justify remaining wrong.

Past kindness can also deceive us. A person supports relatives for years or serves a useful cause and eventually feels entitled to be careless without anyone objecting. Earlier good does not permit a later injustice. Gratitude for being enabled to obey Allah should help us remain obedient, not furnish an argument against whoever asks us to honour a right or fulfil a duty.

Remember the help through which your work became possible. You learned because someone taught you. You worked because Allah gave you health, ability, and time. You gave because He provided for you. None of this erases your effort, but it keeps you from forgetting His favour. Think of the good you once wished to do but could not, and which later became possible through circumstances you did not create alone.

Remember, too, the shortcomings that other people do not see. Not to expose yourself, and not to despise yourself, but to remain honest. They may praise the patience you show in company while you know how much more patience you need at home. Let their kind opinion encourage you to become more truthful in private rather than persuade you that you have already become everything they imagine.

Another form of self-admiration grows from being quiet about our deeds. We begin to think ourselves better than people who speak about theirs. But keeping

⁵⁶**The meaning of arrogance.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Faith, hadith 91.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. The Prophet defined arrogance as rejecting truth and belittling people, distinguishing it from liking fine clothes and shoes.

your own work hidden does not give you knowledge of their hearts. Be grateful for the discretion Allah has helped you maintain, ask Him for sincerity, and stop comparing what you do not know. Contempt for others is not a cure for showing off.

Nor is the cure a denial of your real abilities. You may accept a responsibility you can fulfil, describe your experience when necessary, and improve your work. Humility means recognising both your strengths and their limits, asking for help, and accepting review. Denying every ability can prevent a benefit you are capable of providing. That is not what caring for the heart requires.

When you make a mistake, apologise for something specific. You were late in fulfilling a right, did not check a report, or spoke hurtfully. Then repair what you can. General declarations about having many faults do not return a right to its owner. Putting one real wrong right is more useful than a lengthy performance of humility that changes nothing.

Whenever Allah enables you to do good, thank Him and ask for acceptance. Whenever you recognise a failing, repent without despair. There is ample room for good work between gratitude and seeking forgiveness. Do not assign all the credit to yourself, and do not deny Allah's mercy towards you. You are a servant who needs his Lord before, during, and after obedience. That need does not end when the deeds become numerous.

37. Do Not Let Fear of Showing Off Stop You

Some people fear showing off so much that the fear stops them from obeying Allah. They want to read the Qur'an but worry that others will think they want admiration. They are asked to teach something they know and refuse because they cannot guarantee the purity of their intention. Concern about a corrupt purpose needs attention, but the concern itself does not prove that abandoning the good is the right answer.

An obligation does not disappear because someone can see you fulfil it. You pray on time, return what has been entrusted to you, and provide the support you

owe, even when people know. If you find yourself leaning towards their praise, resist that inclination while doing what is required. We do not wait for a heart in which no unwanted thought ever arises. We obey Allah and ask Him to improve our hearts as we do so.

With voluntary worship, keeping some things private may help you, while there may be a benefit in making other things known. You can give without an announcement and also join work in which people need to know who is responsible. Consider your circumstances and the need of the task. Do not adopt a rule that forbids all visible good or requires everything you do to be shown.

Suppose you are visiting someone when prayer becomes due. You hesitate to get up because you worry that others might think you are trying to look religious. You need neither a speech about your devotion nor an apology for praying. Get up calmly and pray. You are seeking Allah's pleasure. You cannot prevent every interpretation that might cross another person's mind.

The fear can also arise in teaching. You know a useful answer but worry that you may be praised for knowing it. Explain what you know and admit what you do not. You are not being asked to assume a role beyond your ability. You are being asked not to withhold needed knowledge merely because someone may appreciate it. Being honest about the limits of your knowledge can itself help protect your purpose.

It is reassuring to distinguish a thought from a choice. You may imagine people being impressed, dislike the idea of working for that reason, and return to seeking Allah's pleasure. Resisting the thought is not acting for their admiration. Ibn Rajab explains that an intrusive desire to show off, when resisted, differs from one deliberately entertained; the different situations should not all receive one undifferentiated judgement.⁵⁷

Do not search for a fresh doubt after every movement. Intend the obedience

⁵⁷ **The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

and reject a corrupt purpose you actually recognise. If doubts continue without pointing to anything definite, do not let them govern your worship. If, on the other hand, you know that you are deliberately performing for attention, correct that and repent. Ignoring unsupported doubts is not an excuse for persisting in an evident wrong.

It can help to reduce publicity that the task does not require. Teaching does not need to be accompanied by stories of how widely you read. A gift does not need a description of how much it cost you. Advice does not need an account that places you above the person receiving it. Often you can do the good fully while saying less about yourself, leaving others with its benefit and your heart with fewer distractions.

Do not use someone else's fear of showing off to turn them away from obedience. When a young person begins doing good, offer support and gentle instruction rather than greeting them with suspicious questions about their motives. They may need encouragement and learning more than repeated warnings. Help them hold hope and caution together, and improve their purpose while continuing the work.

Someone may accuse you of something that is not in your heart. You do not have to disclose all your private worship to prove otherwise. Correct an actual fault if there is one. But an unsupported accusation about the heart need not draw you into an endless argument. Allah knows what you intended. You need His pleasure more than you need everyone to accept your account of yourself.

Remember how many rights can only be fulfilled among people. Caring for your family, helping a neighbour, teaching a child, and doing your job properly may all be seen and thanked. Do not flee them in search of an imaginary life with no observers. Learn to serve sincerely where you are, care for your intention as best you can, and seek forgiveness when you fall short.

Do not delay the beginning of good until you feel completely secure about yourself. Begin with what Allah has prescribed, learn, renew your intention, and ask for help. Correct a weakness you recognise. If people praise you, do not make their praise your aim. In this way, concern about showing off can help you become more sincere instead of stopping the very obedience in which you hoped to be sincere.

38. Praise You Did Not Seek

The Prophet was asked about someone who does good and is then praised for it. He said, “That is the believer’s early glad tidings.”⁵⁸ How reassuring this is for a heart afraid that every pleasure in a kind word must be showing off. You may act for Allah, then be discovered and thanked. Feeling happy is different from beginning the work in order to hear that praise.

Distinguish why you acted from something pleasant that happened afterwards. You helped because you wanted to benefit your friend and please Allah; then you heard their thanks. You do not have to deny your happiness or accuse the whole earlier deed. Thank Allah, appreciate your friend’s kind words, and remain in need of acceptance. Praise by itself is not a certificate that the deed has been accepted.

The experience may, however, alter your next choice. You did something the first time without expecting recognition, then begin choosing the next deed to obtain the same response. That calls for a fresh correction. It does not require you to declare the past entirely corrupt. What you enjoyed after an action need not become the purpose for which you choose the next one.

The absence of thanks may help you notice something about yourself. Perhaps you feel a little disappointed and continue fulfilling your duty. Or perhaps every kindness has become conditional on an unspoken promise of admiration. Feelings do not provide a final verdict on intention, but they can alert us to something that needs care. Ask what you will choose after the feeling, not only whether the feeling occurred.

Those who receive kindness should be grateful. We should not disregard the effort of relatives or colleagues and then demand sincerity from them when they are hurt. The person doing the work strives to act for Allah; the rest of us strive to be appreciative and fair. Someone may seek divine reward in providing for a family, while the family thanks and helps them. There is no conflict between the

⁵⁸ **Praise after a good deed.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2642.

The Prophet described praise received after doing good as the believer’s early glad tidings. This differs from beginning worship in order to obtain praise. See also Ibn Rajab’s discussion in note [56].

two.

Praise also needs limits. The Prophet taught those who have reason to commend someone to speak according to what they know and not declare anyone pure before Allah.⁵⁹ Instead of certifying a hidden heart, describe a kindness you observed. Thank the person for honesty, cooperation, or gentleness, and hope for good for them. Do not place them beyond error or beyond other people's right to offer correction.

If someone credits you with something you did not do, put the matter right kindly. A shared achievement may be attributed to you alone; mention the others. Money you delivered may be mistaken for money you donated; explain. You need not deny your real part. You simply should not preserve a false impression because it makes you look better.

Seeking praise is also different from seeking a right. Someone may claim your work, causing you to lose payment or an opportunity you earned. You can request fair treatment truthfully and justly. Do not use sincerity as a reason to accept injustice, or use a professional grievance as an excuse for revenge or falsehood. Protect the right and attend to your intention at the same time.

You may want your family to recognise that you are tired. A need for affection and cooperation is not automatically showing off. You can ask for help or appreciation without repeatedly holding past kindness over them. Explain your need calmly. Honest conversation is better than agreeing to everything and then becoming angry because others failed to understand an expectation you never expressed.

When praise becomes frequent, remember that you know things about yourself that other people do not. Do not betray their good opinion through deliberate carelessness in private. Let their words encourage greater honesty rather than assure you that you have already become everything they describe. Praying for them may be more useful than replaying their praise to yourself all day.

Criticism, likewise, is not proof that Allah has rejected you. It may be accurate,

⁵⁹ **Care in praising people.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 3000.

Narrated by Abu Bakrah. A person offering praise should express what they reasonably consider on the basis of knowledge, leaving the final reckoning to Allah and not certifying anyone before Him.

in which case you can learn. It may be unfair, in which case you must not answer it with injustice. Praise and blame need to be weighed against what is true; they are not final judgements on your heart. Use people's observations to improve your work without making their affection the reason for your worship.

You may enjoy a kind word and still be a servant seeking forgiveness. You may feel hurt by coldness and still fulfil what you owe. We do not need hearts that pretend never to be affected. We need hearts that do not use those feelings to justify disobedience. When praise comes, thank Allah; when it does not, ask Him for steadfastness. In both situations, ask Him sincerely to accept what you have done.

39. When Someone Offers Advice

Someone points out a mistake and you feel upset. Their manner may have been harsh, or the correction may have embarrassed you in front of others. You need not pretend that these feelings vanish at once. But do not let them displace the central question: is the observation true? If it is, correcting the mistake will benefit you, even though you wish it had been mentioned more gently.

Allah commands us to stand firmly for justice as witnesses for Him, "even against yourselves." [Qur'an 4:135] Honesty before Allah means receiving the truth when it supports us and when it is against us. Sincerity is not simply liking speeches about fairness. Sometimes fairness asks us to return money, correct an account, or apologise. That is where the principle becomes our responsibility.

Suppose you entered a wrong figure in a report and a colleague corrected you publicly. You can amend the figure and then ask for personal observations to be raised privately. Their poor manner is no justification for retaining a number you know is wrong. Equally, correcting the number does not oblige you to accept humiliation or repeated mistreatment.

Advice may also come from someone you do not like. That can be difficult, because we prefer the truth to arrive through people we favour. Yet a genuine desire for what is right allows us to receive it from whoever brings it. You can acknowl-

edge that someone is right about this matter without agreeing with everything they say. Fairness protects you from rejecting the truth because of its speaker.

Another mistake is to answer every observation by appealing to our good intentions. You tell someone hurt by your words that you never meant to upset them. That may be true, but an apology or clarification may still be necessary. Explain your intention and acknowledge what happened. A sound purpose does not remove your responsibility to attend to the effect of what you said.

You are not, however, required to accept every accusation. When something you did not do is attributed to you, you may deny it and explain the facts. Humility does not demand a false confession or forbid asking for evidence. Distinguish defending a right from defending a known wrong. The first is justice; the second needs repentance, even when you call it protecting your dignity.

You may need time to become calm and understand. Say that you will consider the matter, and then genuinely do so. Do not use delay to forget the advice. Seek guidance from someone trustworthy if necessary, giving the events as they happened rather than arranging them to produce the answer you prefer. Advice based on an incomplete account can confirm a mistake instead of correcting it.

When you are the adviser, remember that the person before you feels hurt just as you do. Address conduct you know about rather than claiming knowledge of the heart. Explain that an action harmed someone or that an attribution is inaccurate. Do not assert without evidence that the person only wants fame. Advice is a trust, not an opportunity to release your anger or prove that you know someone's heart better than they do.

Nor should you require elaborate gratitude as proof that your advice helped. The person may need time, improve quietly, or learn the same lesson from someone else. If their good is what you want, be glad that it reached them even when they do not credit you. Sometimes the most honest advice brings a person closer to the truth without demanding a lasting place for the adviser in their estimation.

Our homes need enough safety for an apology to be possible. When a child, spouse, or sibling admits a mistake, do not turn that admission into a weapon for every later disagreement. Require the wrong to be put right while leaving room

for repentance. Constantly exposing past faults may teach people to conceal them. Justice joined with mercy helps them face the wrong without losing anyone's rights.

A sincere response to advice should affect the work. Correct the information, fulfil the trust, and return to the person you hurt. Saying that you love advice is not enough if the same mistake continues because you have taken no step to change it. You may still slip and need to try again. The important thing is not to make repeated weakness a reason to stop trying.

You do not have to emerge from every discussion as the person who was right. Seek what pleases Allah and return when the truth becomes clear. Fairness towards the person who corrected you does not make you smaller; an honest apology does not erase your good. Thank Allah for those who help you, and ask Him for a heart that receives the truth, a tongue that speaks it gently, and actions that show you have accepted it.

40. When Someone Else Succeeds

We may be pleased for someone far removed from our lives, yet find happiness harder when the successful person began alongside us. A colleague receives an opportunity we wanted. A friend becomes skilled at something we have struggled to learn. A relative is praised for their kindness. A question arises: why them and not me? Meet that moment honestly and gently, without allowing disappointment to become injustice.

The Prophet taught that we should love for our brother what we love for ourselves.⁶⁰ We want good for ourselves and learn to want it for others too. We need not stop striving or dislike our own success. We simply should not treat another person's blessing as our misfortune. We can work hard, pray for the person ahead of us, and learn from what they have done well.

The Prophet also described the worthy desire to emulate a person given wealth

⁶⁰**Loving good for another believer.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, chapter 7, hadith 13.

Narrated by Anas. The hadith teaches loving for one's brother what one loves for oneself, rather than allowing permissible competition to become envy or aggression.

who spends it rightly and a person given wisdom who acts on it and teaches it.⁶¹ This is not the envy that wishes a blessing removed. You see something good and ask Allah for similar good—not for its owner to lose it. Admiration can then become a useful encouragement rather than resentment.

When discomfort appears, do not feed it by belittling the person. Do not search for a fault to make hearing their praise easier, spread an account you have not checked, or withhold a statement you know is fair. All your feelings may not change immediately. You can nevertheless restrain your tongue and actions from wrongdoing while asking Allah to improve your heart.

Competition can hide behind words that sound like concern for good work. We examine another initiative severely while excusing similar faults in our own. We feel pleased when it struggles, then say that we are worried about the people it serves. Ask honestly: do I want this fault corrected, or do I want it to remain so that my superiority seems proved? The answer may show you what to change in your purpose and speech.

This does not prohibit sound criticism. You may identify a harmful project, advise work you do not lead, or pursue a right that was denied you. Do so with knowledge and fairness, acknowledging both what is good and what is wrong. One valid objection does not permit exaggeration. A rival's strengths do not become faults because they discomfort you. Seek repair rather than the satisfaction of seeing someone fail.

Imagine that a group chooses another person to lead useful work. If the selection process was unfair, discuss that clearly. If the person is suitable, consider what help you can offer: experience, time, or advice. Do not make people's benefit conditional on you being the leader whose name is seen. Do not undermine what you could help succeed.

You may also feel sad because your effort has not brought the progress someone else has made. That is not necessarily envy. Your circumstances, abilities, and

⁶¹ **Emulation in learning and giving.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter 15, hadith 73.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. The expression commonly rendered "no envy except in two cases" refers here to desiring similar good without wishing its owner to lose it.

responsibilities differ. Consider what you can learn and improve without making the comparison a judgement on your whole life. There may be considerable good in your home or daily responsibilities that cannot be seen in a brief announcement of success.

A simple step is to congratulate the person sincerely. Do not attach a reminder that you helped them or a question designed to diminish the achievement. Say the kind words they deserve, and pray for them privately. If this is difficult at first, work on it. The effort is not to perform affection while planning harm, but to begin with conduct that helps you leave harm and grow in goodwill.

When you need to learn from them, do not let embarrassment stop you. Ask about a useful method, benefit from their experience, and thank them. You may discover that comparison had kept readily available knowledge from you. Someone seeking Allah's pleasure can welcome good through another person's hands as readily as they hope to offer it through their own. We do not always need to be the teacher or the giver.

Within the family, do not pass destructive comparison on to children. Encourage one without humiliating another. Notice each child's effort and teach them to be happy for each other. A sibling's success should not become an occasion for reminding the others that they are inferior. Competition may encourage effort, but mercy and fairness are needed to keep it from damaging affection.

As we become more honest in seeking Allah's pleasure, we learn to recognise good as good even when it comes through someone else. We do not claim that this requires no struggle or award ourselves a certificate of purity. We begin with a particular act: a genuine congratulation, a fair statement, or help we can offer. Then we ask Allah to make us love good for others as we love it for ourselves.

Part Six: Sincerity at Home and at Work

We need not wait for an unusual opportunity to learn sincerity. At home are people who need our gentleness. At work are responsibilities that need our honesty. Around us are people we can help with what we know or possess. These familiar tasks may recur every day without our remembering to seek Allah's pleasure through them. When we attend to our purpose and do them well, ordinary life offers many opportunities to hope for His reward.

Seeking that reward never excuses neglecting a right. Someone who wants Allah's pleasure should not mistreat a colleague, expose a person receiving charity, or neglect the family while relying on generosity towards strangers. A heart being put right should make us more honest in these details, more merciful to those unable to repay us, and more willing to continue doing good when thanks are scarce.

41. Your Kindness at Home

'A'ishah was asked what the Prophet used to do at home. She explained that he would serve his family, and when prayer became due, he would go out to pray.⁶² His standing did not keep him from helping them, and his care for them did not make him neglect worship. His example reminds us that those closest to us are not less deserving of our kindness.

We may hurry to assist a guest while overlooking the effort of the person who prepared the meal. We listen attentively to a stranger, then grow impatient with

⁶²**The Prophet's service at home.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter 44, hadith 676.

'A'ishah was asked what the Prophet did in his home. She described his service to his family and his going out to pray when prayer became due.

family members whose needs are repeated. Familiarity is a blessing; it does not make service worthless. The people who live with us need mercy every day, not only on occasions when others can observe it.

Household work repeats itself. A meal is prepared and eaten; a room is cleaned and soon needs cleaning again; a child is comforted and later cries. Because the tasks never seem finished, we may overlook what they accomplish. People were fed, rested, and cared for. Those are real benefits even when nothing remains that can be displayed as an achievement.

You can intend to serve your family in obedience to Allah and out of kindness towards them. You need no long declaration before every task. Remember the purpose as you help your parents, support your spouse, or show affection to your child. Within the home are deeds for which you can hope for reward, just as you hope for reward when you give charity outside it.

Anas said that he served the Messenger of Allah for ten years and that the Prophet never even said “uff” to him—an expression of irritation.⁶³ This was ten years of living and working together, not one courteous moment before visitors. It invites us to consider how we speak to those who help us. Does a small mistake become a reason for humiliation? Can we be patient when the person before us has little power to answer back?

Mercy does not mean leaving every mistake uncorrected. We teach, explain what is needed, and establish fair limits without wounding the person. You can say that something needs to be put right without saying that its doer is useless. There is a considerable difference between guidance that helps someone learn and words that leave them ashamed whenever they remember them.

Sharing the work of a home requires fairness. We should not tell one person to seek Allah’s reward for doing everything while excusing ourselves from helping. Ask what you can do and agree on arrangements suited to everyone’s abilities and circumstances. A little practical help at a difficult moment may express more care

⁶³**The Prophet’s gentleness towards Anas.**

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Virtues, hadith 2309.

Anas describes ten years of service and the Prophet’s kind treatment, including never addressing him with even an expression of irritation.

than a present offered after a long period of ignoring the need.

If you are the exhausted person, explain it. Say that you need rest or assistance rather than continually exceeding your capacity and then becoming angry that no one understood. Hoping for reward does not forbid an honest conversation or require you to hide every need. You may ask gently for what is fair while continuing to seek Allah's pleasure in the care you give.

Beware of being softer with strangers and harsher with those close to you on the grounds that your family knows the real you. Being genuine does not mean releasing every irritation at home. Someone who seeks Allah's pleasure watches their speech with familiar people, not only with those whose judgement they fear. Holding back one hurtful remark at home may test the good character you speak about elsewhere.

A person may become so busy serving others that duties at home are left undone. Public service matters, but rights need to be ordered with knowledge and fairness. Do not always choose work that brings visible appreciation while abandoning a familiar responsibility. Learn what you owe first, then extend your voluntary service as you are able.

A good purpose also needs sensible planning. Do not promise hospitality or assistance and then place the burden of your promise on the family without agreement. Wanting to be generous does not excuse ignoring time, money, and energy. A generous host is considerate towards those who help, thanks them, and does not purchase guests' approval through their exhaustion or embarrassment.

The beginning may be an apology for your tone, a share in a task you have ignored, or a conversation in which you put down the phone and listen. Do not dismiss these steps because they do not look like major achievements. Better companionship often grows through small, repeatable actions, not broad promises whose effect the family cannot find in daily life.

When you do help, do not turn it into an argument for every later disagreement. Discuss the present issue fairly rather than collecting years of service to force the other person into silence. You have a right to consideration, and they have a right not to have kindness held over them. We all need our effort to be seen, and we all

need to learn to ask for that without causing hurt.

Enter your home hoping to be a source of good to those within it. You may become tired and fall short; seek forgiveness and repair what you can. You may not receive the response you hoped for; ask respectfully for your rights while fulfilling theirs. This effort is not distant from sincerity. It is one of its nearest settings, among the people who know you well, and it is somewhere you can begin today.

42. Raising Our Children for Allah

The Prophet kissed al-Hasan ibn 'Ali while al-Aqra' ibn Habis was present. Al-Aqra' said that he had ten children and had never kissed any of them. The Messenger of Allah replied, "Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy."⁶⁴ Affection was not a failure of discipline, and showing kindness did not diminish an elder's standing. Our children need love as well as instruction.

We want our children to become good people and succeed, and there is much to hope for in that desire. But what else do we carry within it? Do we genuinely want their good, or want people to praise our parenting? Honest love and a wish for admiration may coexist. We need to learn to put the child's welfare ahead of what we would like to hear about ourselves.

The need becomes clear when we are angry about a mistake because relatives saw it, although we overlook the same thing in private. A child may learn that the important issue is not embarrassing us rather than being truthful before Allah. Protect their privacy, but address the fault whether others saw it or not. Explain that what pleases Allah does not change with the audience.

A child memorises a surah, and you are delighted and want every visitor to hear it. Encouragement is good, but consider the child's feelings. Do not make every gathering an examination in which they must prove your success. Do not

⁶⁴ **Mercy towards children.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Good Manners, chapter 18, hadith 5997.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. After the Prophet kissed al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, al-Aqra' ibn Habis mentioned that he had never kissed any of his ten children. The Prophet answered that whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.

scold them for becoming nervous. Let them enjoy learning, explain the meaning appropriately, and teach them that the Qur'an is guidance and worship before it is an occasion for praise.

Nor does a child need an alarming question about their intention after every compliment. Explain that Allah loves this good and that we do it seeking His pleasure whether people know or not. Encourage the right action without declaring a purity of heart you cannot know. Gentle, repeated teaching is more helpful than an accusation the child does not understand.

Raising children for Allah also means distinguishing religious obligations from personal preferences. You may favour a course of study, a career, or a way of life and have experience worth sharing. But do not make every preference a religious duty or every difference of taste a sin. Explain your reasons, listen to them, and seek sound knowledge when a religious ruling is needed.

Children learn from our apologies. You may be right to correct a behaviour but wrong in the words or punishment you used. Acknowledge that and repair what you can. Apologising does not abolish your responsibility. It teaches that both adults and children return to the truth. Seeing you accept correction in a real situation may teach humility better than a long explanation of it.

When a child struggles, do not make love a prize reserved for success. They need to know that you can advise, correct, and remain compassionate. Do not call a mistake right, but do not reduce the whole child to that mistake. Help them take a manageable next step, notice what they have done well, and avoid comparisons that suggest they occupy a smaller place in your affection.

Parents can become so concerned with outward religious behaviour that they miss a child's need to ask a quiet question. A child who complies may still be carrying confusion they are afraid to mention. Listen without mockery. A question is not itself evidence of corruption. Look together for what helps, so that the child can find in you support for understanding and practising the faith.

Protecting their privacy is part of the trust. Not every touching moment of prayer, tears, or repentance should be published. Consider the child's need for safety and how they may feel about the recording when older. You can be glad

and encourage others without making private moments available to everyone. The amount of a child's life we display does not measure the care we give them.

You may do what you can and not see the result quickly. Parenting calls for patience, prayer, and reconsideration, while guidance belongs to Allah. Delay does not prove that every effort was wasted or justify abandoning advice. Learn what you need, consult someone who understands the circumstances, and change a method that you have discovered is creating greater distance.

Do not give children the task of completing what you feel you missed in your own life. They have abilities and lawful interests that may differ from yours. Guide them towards what benefits and warn them of harm, but do not treat a wish to make them copies of yourself as the measure of every choice. Honest love helps them pursue the good they can do, not a picture that makes your comparisons with other families more comfortable.

Our prayers for them should reach beyond visible achievement. Ask Allah to guide their hearts, improve their deeds, and give them mercy, truthfulness, and moral restraint. Ask for patience, fairness, and wisdom for yourself. Do not pray only that they do what you want. What we want can itself be mistaken, and we need guidance alongside them.

Let our children know that we wish them Allah's pleasure and that we, too, are learning and striving. We are not perfect, and they will not be free of error. In a merciful home, the person who errs can return, the questioner can understand, and the child who does well can be happy without conceit. These are lessons we hope to learn while teaching them, asking Allah to make the work sincerely His.

43. Honesty at Work

The meeting ends, and a task remains that no one is watching. You can finish it honestly or do only enough to make it look good when presented. That simple choice can reveal something of faith's effect on your day. Trustworthiness is not only a subject discussed in the mosque. It is also the time you committed, the information entrusted to you, and the right someone is waiting for you to fulfil.

Allah commands us to return trusts to those entitled to them. [Qur'an 4:58] Fulfilling a trust includes knowing your responsibility, making a proper effort to perform it, and not giving a false impression of what you have done. You may seek a lawful income while also intending to support yourself and your family and benefit the people your work serves.

Wanting a salary is not, by itself, a defective intention. You work under an agreement and have payment and rights to protect. But needing that salary does not make dishonesty or cheating permissible. You can ask for an increase or seek a better opportunity while remaining faithful to the task before you. Seeking Allah's reward increases concern for what is right; it does not cancel your right to lawful payment.

One test arises when you discover an error in a report and hide it to avoid embarrassment. Delaying the truth may cause someone else to make a decision using false information. An early correction is better than protecting a mistake until it becomes larger. Explain what happened and what can be done. Do not shift responsibility to an absent colleague who cannot defend themselves.

A figure may be accurate while the way you present it creates a conclusion you know is false. Honesty is not confined to the accuracy of each isolated word. It includes the meaning you intend to convey. When someone has a right to information that affects their decision, do not deliberately withhold it to win praise for a result that was not achieved as you suggest.

Honesty does not mean revealing workplace secrets to everyone. Give information to those entitled to receive it and protect personal privacy. When disclosure duties or the limits of confidentiality are unclear, seek informed advice about the facts and obligations. Do not use confidentiality to protect betrayal, or a wish to correct wrongdoing as an excuse to expose unrelated information.

Trustworthy workers also need clear arrangements. Defined responsibilities, recorded agreements, checked accounts, and delivery dates help protect rights. Review is not an accusation about the heart: a truthful person can forget, and a diligent person can make a mistake. Accepting scrutiny helps you correct what you missed and allows confidence to rest on clarity rather than courtesy alone.

If you supervise others, do not use religious reminders to demand work they do not owe without their consent. Pay what is due, distribute tasks fairly, and explain expectations. You may encourage cooperation, but someone asking for an agreed right does not thereby become weak in faith. Trustworthiness is required of the person giving instructions as much as the person carrying them out.

Teaching a colleague what they need, leaving clear information for a successor, or preventing an error may all be useful contributions. Your name may never appear in the final result, but you know what you offered and can hope for reward. Do not withhold useful knowledge merely to remain the only person able to perform a task. Information restricted to authorised people must, of course, still be protected.

The wish to look capable of everything may make you accept unfamiliar work or promise a deadline you cannot meet. Honesty about your capacity is better than enthusiasm that harms others. Say where you need learning or assistance. Acknowledging a limit is not necessarily a failure of trustworthiness; it can be the first thing that protects it.

When you make a mistake, do not answer every consequence with a claim of good intention. Explain, help put it right, and learn how to prevent repetition. A good purpose matters, but it does not replace precautions you knew and ignored. Sincerity should encourage you to do well what you can and ask about what you do not know, rather than rest content that you did not mean harm.

Someone else may receive a bonus or promotion before you. You can ask about the criteria and request fairness, but do not damage your work in retaliation. A customer or member of the public should not suffer for a grievance they know nothing about. Pursue your claim in its proper place and preserve innocent people's rights. You may need to change employment; do so honestly and fulfil your commitments.

Remember the rest of your life too. Continual overwork that causes you to neglect family obligations, health, or required worship is not made good by calling it dedication. Seek an arrangement that respects those responsibilities, and decline what you cannot sustain. You can take work seriously without making its evaluation the sole judgement on your worth.

At the day's end, attend to a task or promise you can still put right, then ask Allah for blessing and acceptance. The day may contain no dramatic event, yet offer many choices of honesty, fairness, and benefit. Fulfil them for Allah as best you can. Do not undervalue a trust you preserved simply because no one noticed that you could have betrayed it.

44. Working Together

The Prophet described an honest Muslim treasurer who gives what he is instructed to give, in full, willingly, and to the intended recipient, as one of those who give charity.⁶⁵ The money need not have belonged to him. He participated through faithful and willing service. This offers hope to those who help good reach others without being able to provide all its funding themselves.

It is easy to notice the donor and overlook the people who found the need, safeguarded the money, transported the goods, or checked delivery. Many people share in useful work, each with a responsibility. Do not dismiss your role because you are absent from the handover, or someone else's because you receive more attention. Allah knows the work people missed as fully as the work they saw.

Notice the treasurer's qualities in the hadith. He is trustworthy, delivers the full amount, gives it to the intended recipient, and does so willingly. The promise is not attached merely to being employed by a charitable organisation. Reducing the amount, delaying it without right, or changing its destination according to personal preference would betray the trust. Calling a project charitable does not make every action within it correct.

The money may arrive accompanied by words that hurt. A worker may question the recipient contemptuously, repeatedly stress the organisation's generosity, or require a public show of gratitude. A person in need requires both assistance and dignity. You can check eligibility and request necessary information without

⁶⁵ **The faithful treasurer.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter 25, hadith 1438.

Narrated by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. An honest Muslim treasurer who carries out instructions, gives in full and willingly, and delivers to the intended recipient is one of those who give charity. The account honours faithful participation in conveying good.

making someone apologise for needing help or placate you to receive what was allocated to them.

Clear arrangements protect affection in shared work. Who makes the decision? Who follows it through? What authority does each person have? Agreeing on these matters is not coldness between companions. It prevents disputes caused by incompatible assumptions. Enthusiasm is not enough when everyone expects something from the others that was never agreed.

You may become attached to an idea you suggested, then find the team changing it to make it more useful. Explain a valid objection and discuss it plainly. But if the change improves the work, do not cling to the original simply because it was yours. A genuine love of the good should allow you to accept whatever increases its benefit, even when someone else provides the improvement.

A leader should welcome the growth of those around them. Train people, share what they need to know, and help them take responsibility. Do not make your indispensability in every detail the objective. A lasting contribution may be that the work continues well after you leave—not that it collapses whenever you are absent so everyone can see how much they need you.

Workers deserve appreciation and accurate credit. It is not acceptable to tell them to work for Allah and then deliberately attribute their efforts to someone else. Sincerity does not permit stealing another person's contribution. Thank people fairly. If you are the person whose work was misattributed, seek an appropriate correction without turning the dispute into a reason to destroy the benefit being provided.

You may be assigned something that seems small: arranging names, checking a figure, or contacting a recipient. Do it carefully; a significant outcome may depend on it. Do not always choose the tasks that people see and avoid the patient work they miss. A task's worth is not measured by how often it is discussed, but by the right fulfilled and the benefit achieved.

Love for a team does not require silence about its mistakes. Advise through the proper route, distinguish a lapse from betrayal, and do not base a verdict on a rumour. Honest and fair review may be uncomfortable, yet it protects the work.

Equally, a personal disagreement does not entitle you to publish everything you know of the group's confidential affairs.

You may be moved from a role you loved or see someone else chosen for it. You can ask why, learn, and request fair treatment. But distress does not permit you to obstruct the interests of people who did nothing wrong. Hand over faithfully, protect what must remain confidential, and ask Allah to help you with your disappointment. Trustworthiness when upset is more meaningful than loyalty displayed only while content.

Do not give a team promises beyond your ability. If your capacity changes, tell those relying on you early. If you need to withdraw, do so clearly instead of disappearing and leaving others searching for you. A good intention includes respecting colleagues' time and effort, not only enthusiasm for the beneficiaries outside the team.

Cooperation also needs room for learning. Help a person repair an error that can be repaired rather than treating every lapse as grounds to dismiss them. Where harm repeatedly occurs, establish appropriate limits. Mercy should not become neglect, and accountability need not become humiliation. The aim is sound work and people's safety, not proving that one person is more powerful than another.

You can hope for a share in the good you serve faithfully, even if neither the money nor the original idea was yours. Do not diminish your role or enlarge it at your partners' expense. Work honestly where you are, appreciate those who help you, and ask Allah to improve all your intentions. May He unite us in obedience rather than let the desire for praise separate us from good we could accomplish together.

45. Good That Comes Through Someone Else

A man came to the Prophet asking for a mount after being left without one. The Prophet had nothing available to carry him. Another man said that he could direct him to someone who would help. The Messenger of Allah then said, "Whoever

directs someone to good has a reward like that of the one who does it.”⁶⁶ The guide could not meet the need alone, but he offered the useful knowledge he possessed.

Many opportunities take this simple form. You cannot afford the assistance, but know a trustworthy organisation that can provide it. You do not know the answer, but know someone who does. You cannot solve a whole difficulty, but can identify a sound first step. Inability to do everything need not stop you from doing the part within your reach.

Teaching needs the same openness. A questioner deserves a reliable answer, not a relationship in which they must depend on you alone. Direct them to someone better informed when necessary, and admit when you do not know. Your contribution is not erased because the learner benefited from another teacher. You helped them reach what they needed.

Allah says, “Say: This is my way. I call to Allah with clear knowledge—I and those who follow me.” [Qur’an 12:108] Calling people to Allah requires knowledge of what we say. Enthusiasm does not compensate for ignorance, and fear of appearing uninformed does not justify inventing an answer. Admitting that we do not know is more truthful than protecting our image by misleading a questioner.

Even when you know the answer, you may make it longer than the person needs. A beginner asks a straightforward question, and you provide disputes and unfamiliar terms because you enjoy appearing widely read. Return to their need. More detail is not always more benefit. Sometimes a brief, clear explanation is kinder, with more available when they are ready for it.

Yet we should not dislike all visible good. Jarir narrated that people in evident need came to the Prophet, who encouraged charity. A man from the Ansar brought a purse, others followed, and the Prophet spoke of the reward of someone who begins a good practice in Islam.⁶⁷ The man took the initiative in an already

⁶⁶**Directing someone to good.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1893.

Narrated by Abu Mas’ud al-Ansari. When a man needed a mount, another offered to direct him to someone able to provide one. The Prophet stated that the person directing to good receives a reward like its doer’s.

⁶⁷**A good example that others follow.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Zakat, hadith 1017.

Narrated by Jarir ibn ‘Abdullah. People of Mudar arrived in need; an Ansari gave charity and others

prescribed act of charity. Others followed his example, and the public beginning benefited those in need.

The account shows that a useful example can be open. We begin and encourage what Allah has prescribed, not invent a new worship and justify it with a pleasant intention. You may give in public to encourage others while working on sincerity. In another situation, keeping it quiet may be better. Consider legitimate benefit and honest purpose, not visibility or secrecy alone.

Honest teaching also preserves attribution. When you quote a scholar, acknowledge the source where appropriate. If a colleague supplies an idea, do not present it as though it occurred only to you. Recognising another person's contribution does not diminish your own. It teaches listeners that knowledge can be shared and that reaching the truth matters more than keeping every credit for ourselves.

A person you taught may later learn something you do not know. Do not let that trouble you. Listen, check what they say, and accept what is sound. Their new understanding may have grown through the help you gave them. It is good for a learner to see that a teacher welcomes their growth and does not consider receiving the truth from them a loss of standing.

A friend may change through someone else's advice after you have counselled them for a long time. Be glad for the improvement rather than demand an admission that you said it first. They may have needed time, understood the later wording more clearly, or encountered circumstances that had not existed before. If you wanted their good, the good you hoped for has arrived.

What you teach may also take time to bear fruit. You do not know what the listener remembers or when they will act. Little gratitude is no reason for harshness, and slow change does not prove a corrupt intention. Explain well, reconsider your approach, and be as patient as you can. You are responsible for useful, honest communication; you do not own people's hearts.

If you discover an error in your teaching, correct it openly enough to reach those affected. Do not hide it under further explanation or change the subject.

followed. The statement about beginning a good practice occurs in this setting of prescribed charity, not as permission to invent contrary worship.

Acknowledge the mistake and explain what is right. This may be difficult, but it teaches something important: the truth of religion and accurate information take precedence over preserving the teacher's appearance.

Do not require your name to remain attached to every later benefit. A sound lesson may be passed on until it helps someone who has never heard of you. Preserve necessary attribution rights, but do not become more anxious about missing praise than missing meaning. We hope that useful good continues even when its first contributor is no longer remembered by those who receive it.

You may know one small thing that opens a useful possibility for someone else. Share it responsibly, do not promise what you cannot know, and do not make assistance conditional on their returning with thanks. Ask Allah to make you beneficial and help you benefit from others. His generosity has given a reward for directing people to good; hope is not confined to those able to accomplish every kindness themselves.

46. Before You Publish

You finish a useful piece of writing and begin wondering how far it will spread, who will like it, and whether people will remember your name. Thinking about reach is not entirely wrong; you may want more people to benefit. But when admiration matters more than the truth of what you share, pause and reconsider what you are trying to achieve.

Begin with the material itself. Is the report accurate? Have you represented the speaker faithfully? Are you entitled to reveal the personal circumstances it contains? These questions precede audience approval. Publishing a false report does not become righteous because it supports a cause you love. Humiliating someone does not become advice because the heading sounds religious.

Allah commands verification of reports and warns against harming people through ignorance, then regretting what was done. [Qur'an 49:6] We may need to check most carefully when a report agrees with our anger. We hurry to share something damaging to an opponent, although we would demand evidence for a

similar report about someone we love. Require evidence in both cases. Fairness does not change with the identity of the person discussed.

Attributing words to the Prophet is a particularly serious trust. You may admire a saying that is not a hadith, or a circulating version may differ from the authentic wording. Verify before passing it on. Popularity and an attractive design do not establish authenticity. If you do not know, ask or refrain from attributing it to him. A sound meaning can be expressed without claiming a prophetic report that has not been established.

Even a correct account can be changed by shortening it. A qualification is removed from a ruling, or part of an answer to a particular situation is presented as a universal judgement. Faithfulness includes enough context to prevent misunderstanding. Do not deliberately retain the attention-grabbing portion while cutting what protects its meaning simply because the qualification attracts fewer viewers.

Photographing charitable work raises rights that must not be forgotten. A person receiving help is not a means to the success of your image. They may agree because they fear losing assistance or do not understand where the photograph will appear. Do not pressure them. Look for a way to communicate the need without exposing them. Encouraging giving does not always require a face or the most painful details of a life.

Sometimes public information is needed for accountability or to encourage support. Provide what the situation requires without unnecessary private detail. Not every post is showing off, and not every silence is sincerity. Nevertheless, an honest purpose should allow you to choose a less conspicuous method when it protects the recipient better and achieves the same benefit.

After publication, notice what is taking your time. Answering genuine questions and correcting misunderstandings can be useful work. Repeatedly checking figures may serve little beyond waiting for praise. Set a period appropriate to the task, then return to the rest of your day. Family rights, prayer, and other responsibilities should not wait indefinitely for a level of engagement that makes you feel satisfied.

Wide circulation does not prove accuracy or acceptance by Allah. An error may spread because it is exciting, while a truthful word reaches only a few. Use

legitimate ways to improve access, but do not magnify a story or wrong someone to achieve it. Good communication includes honesty and benefit, not simply the number of views.

When a published error becomes clear, correct it. Deleting something before it spreads may sometimes be enough; at other times the harm requires an explicit correction reaching those who received it. Consider what removes the misleading impression. Do not preserve your standing by leaving people with something you know is false. An honest apology is better than a long defence you would not accept from anyone else.

An audience may come to expect a particular view from you. Later, you learn something that requires a correction and worry that they will be upset. Do not treat them with contempt or deliberately provoke them, but explain what has become clear respectfully. If you want their good, do not put their immediate satisfaction ahead of honesty. Seeing you correct yourself may teach more than the appearance that you never make mistakes.

Using a platform well also means knowing when not to publish. Not every opinion needs an announcement, every disagreement a comment, or every surge of anger a sentence for the public. Waiting until you are calm may protect fairness. Asking a specialist may be better than rushing an answer merely to remain present in every discussion.

Do not feel compelled to abandon every useful medium because it tests your intention. Learn to use it truthfully, reduce what damages your purpose, and step away when you recognise that the harm outweighs the benefit. Needs and capacities differ. Your experience need not become a ruling for everyone, nor should time on or off a screen become the sole measure of your heart.

Before publishing, ask Allah to make your words true and useful. Then check, be fair, protect those whose privacy must be protected, and publish or refrain according to what you know. Beyond the comments is a much wider life. Be kind to someone in front of you when no photograph is taken. Offer a helpful word to its only listener. Seek Allah's pleasure in all of it.

47. People's Rights Remain

The Prophet asked his Companions who was bankrupt. They described someone without money or possessions. He explained that the bankrupt person from his community would come on the Day of Judgement with prayer, fasting, and charity, yet also with insults, slander, stolen property, bloodshed, and blows inflicted on others. Those whose rights were violated would take from his good deeds. If those deeds were exhausted, their sins would be placed upon him, and he would be cast into the Fire.⁶⁸

This is a warning against combining worship with injustice and imagining that many good deeds remove the need to restore rights. Prayer and charity are good, but they do not give us permission to hurt people. Seeking Allah's pleasure means attending to His rights and the rights of His servants, then returning when we fail. A claim that our hearts are kind is no answer to someone harmed by our actions.

A person may have much good and still owe a wronged person something that must be repaired. Admitting this does not erase their virtues; it helps protect them from the consequences of injustice. Do not answer a claim by listing everything you have done well. Examine the particular right. If established, fulfil it. If not, explain the truth without humiliating the claimant.

The Prophet urged anyone who had wronged another person to settle the wrong before a day when there would be neither dinar nor dirham.⁶⁹ In this life, repayment, apology, and repair remain possible. Do not delay a right you can fulfil because admitting it is embarrassing. Returning the money now is better than continually remembering it and asking forgiveness while making no effort to return it.

⁶⁸ **Bankruptcy on the Day of Judgement.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2581.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. A person comes with worship but has violated other people's rights; good deeds are taken in settlement. Numerous acts of devotion do not permit injury to property, honour, or life.

⁶⁹ **Settling wrongs before the Hereafter.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oppressions, chapter 10, hadith 2449.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Wrongs should be settled before the day when there is neither dinar nor dirham. The appropriate form of restitution depends on the right involved, with care not to create further harm through disclosure.

Begin by identifying what is owed: a known debt, property taken without right, a false report you spread, or someone else's work you claimed. Each wrong needs an appropriate response. Money is returned, false information corrected, and credit restored. When the proper form of repair is unclear, explain the circumstances to knowledgeable people rather than choose a method that creates further harm.

Hurtful speech that never reached its subject is one such situation. What is required may depend on what was said and the consequences of telling them. Do not rush to wound someone simply to relieve your own feelings. Equally, do not use possible harm as an excuse to leave injustice untouched. Seek informed religious guidance and fulfil the necessary repentance, repair, prayer, and clarification in their proper places.

In an apology, place the other person's right ahead of your wish to look good. Say clearly what you did wrong without making the apology conditional on their admitting a greater fault. They may have their own mistakes, which can be discussed appropriately. Those mistakes do not cancel your responsibility. Honesty begins with owning what you know you did.

Do not demand that they forget the hurt immediately. They may need time or an arrangement that ensures the harm has stopped. An apology does not give you unrestricted access to their life. Respect legitimate boundaries and make restitution through a suitable route. Repeated calls or appearances may cause new harm when no such contact is needed.

Someone may announce repentance and then resent the harmed person for continuing to ask for their right. Your repentance does not make a lawful claim aggressive. Returning money is repayment, and restoring attribution is justice—not a favour that requires applause. Thank Allah for helping you return, and leave the other person whatever choice of pardon or lawful claim belongs to them.

Nor should we pressure the wronged person in the name of a pure heart. Forgiveness has its virtue, but encouraging it should not begin by releasing the wrongdoer from repair. The person harmed may first need safety, fair treatment, or an end to the injury. Help secure that. Mention forgiveness gently when appropriate rather than treat a delay in forgiving as a religious failing that adds to their pain.

The sincerity of an apology becomes clearer in the days that follow. Has the behaviour changed? Has the promise been kept? Have you stopped retelling the incident in a way that blames the person hurt? You may need further effort, but do not make apology a repeated formula after which you comfortably resume the same injury. Someone seeking repair looks for what prevents recurrence.

If you cannot repay a financial obligation all at once, do not lie about your means or ignore the person owed. Explain honestly what you can do, seek a permissible arrangement suited to the situation, and work towards repayment. Genuine inability calls for patience and effort, not escape from every question. Allah knows the difference between trying to fulfil a debt and using difficulty as a pretext for delay.

Restoring a right may cost money or standing. That can be hard on the self, but it reminds us whose pleasure we seek. We need not be applauded for putting a wrong right. We need to stop an injustice we know. Fulfil the duty, preserve privacy where lawful, and never use concealment to withhold a right or continue a betrayal.

Hope for Allah's mercy while working to remove injustice, not while deliberately postponing it. Pray, seek forgiveness, give charity, and restore the rights you can. Do not separate these responsibilities so that one act of obedience distracts you from an ongoing sin. We hope for a heart that loves Allah and therefore shows mercy, fears meeting Him and therefore acts fairly, and returns after error with hope rather than another excuse to delay.

48. Mercy for a Vulnerable Creature

A man walking along a road became extremely thirsty. He found a well, climbed down, drank, and came back out. Then he saw a dog panting and licking the earth from thirst. Remembering his own suffering, he recognised that the dog was as thirsty as he had been. He returned to the well, filled his shoe with water, and gave the dog a drink. Allah appreciated his deed and forgave him.⁷⁰

⁷⁰**The man who gave a dog water.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Water Distribution, chapter 9, hadith 2363.

The Companions asked whether there was reward in caring for animals. The Prophet replied that there was reward in kindness to every living creature.⁷¹ Kindness was not confined to someone who could thank its giver. A creature needed water; a man recognised the need and made an effort to meet it. The prophetic account brought news of forgiveness for him.

This widens our hope in the good we can do. A nearby need may seem too small to attend to because its owner cannot speak or repay us. But showing mercy is not insignificant before Allah merely because it is unlikely to become a story told in company. Do the kindness that is right. Every good need not have an impressive form or a well-known recipient.

The man remembered his own thirst when he saw the dog's. He did not say that, having drunk, he had no reason to care. Our own experiences of need can help us recognise the needs around us. Remembering exhaustion can make us considerate towards the tired; knowing loneliness can help us notice someone with no one to talk to. The important thing is that understanding becomes suitable assistance.

You need not experience every pain before showing compassion. Listening and attending carefully can be enough to recognise a need. An older person may be too embarrassed to complain, a child may be unable to explain, and an animal in your care cannot tell you what it lacks. Asking about their needs and learning proper care are responsibilities that should not wait until harm becomes obvious.

Having power over a vulnerable creature does not permit cruelty. Do not frighten it for amusement or hurt it because no one can stop you. Anything entrusted to your care needs appropriate food, water, and attention. If you cannot provide that, seek help or a suitable person to take over rather than leave it suffering through your inability or neglect.

Mercy today may involve preventing harm rather than spending money. Stop

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. In this version, a man descends into a well and gives water to a thirsty dog. It is distinct from the other account about a woman who had engaged in prostitution giving a dog water.

⁷¹ **The man who gave a dog water.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Water Distribution, chapter 9, hadith 2363.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. In this version, a man descends into a well and gives water to a thirsty dog. It is distinct from the other account about a woman who had engaged in prostitution giving a dog water.

mistreatment where you safely can, remove a preventable danger, or alert an appropriate service to a situation needing care. Choose a safe and suitable method. You need not imitate the descent into a well when doing so would endanger you. The lesson is kindness, not reenacting every detail in a different setting.

We affirm that Allah forgave the man because the Prophet told us so. For ourselves, we hope for acceptance without claiming knowledge we have not been given. Do not treat the story as permission to neglect prayer or people's rights, as though one particular action licensed abandoning the rest of the religion. Good news of mercy should increase our desire to obey, not give us leave to wrong others.

A person may show an act of care to teach others, or keep it private. Both settings require attention to intention. Do not make a photograph more important than the creature's comfort or safety. If urgent help is needed, provide it first. An action does not become appropriate merely because the resulting image would be moving, especially if arranging it adds fear or pain.

Sincerity also has room to grow where no response can be expected. The one you help may not know your name or be able to express appreciation. It reminds you that good does not always need audible thanks. A lack of repayment is not automatic proof of sincerity, but it offers a place to return to seeking Allah's pleasure without waiting for a personal return.

Mercy does not require you to carry every suffering in the world. You may see many needs and be able to meet only a few. Do what you can properly, and do not let inability to help everyone keep you from nearby good. Preserve your other obligations and seek advice when needs compete, so that an unconsidered rush of feeling does not cause a duty to be lost.

If you recognise harshness in yourself, begin by stopping harm and doing a manageable kindness. Do not wait for tears or a powerful emotion before being considerate. Attending to a child or elder, or treating someone who works for you well, can be a practical step towards change. Ask Allah to soften your heart and teach you how to care for those you are able to help.

Consider the blessings that seem ordinary: water whenever you want it, food within reach, and somewhere safe to return. Thankfulness includes praising Allah,

using those blessings well, and being gentle with people lacking something you can provide. We need not learn their worth only after losing them. We can learn while they are still ours to enjoy.

The man went back for water for a thirsty creature, and his account continues to remind us of Allah's generosity. Let that reminder become a real act of mercy. Do not dismiss a lawful kindness within your ability. Today it may be at home, at work, or beside a vulnerable creature unable to thank you. Allah knows what you do, and His mercy and acceptance are what we seek.

Part Seven: When Obedience Asks What We Find Difficult

Choosing good can be easy when it agrees with what we want. Our need for sincerity becomes more apparent when the truth asks us to forgive while hurt, admit a mistake whose consequences we fear, or be fair to someone we oppose. At such moments, knowing attractive words about intention is not enough. We need to act on what we know and ask Allah for help with what is difficult.

The aim is not to erase our feelings or pretend that we never grieve or become angry. It is to keep those feelings from making us unjust, dishonest, or unfaithful to a trust. The Prophet's guidance and the accounts of his Companions bring this close to us: people returning to what is right, speech restrained by awareness of Allah, and rights placed ahead of the wish for praise or personal victory.

49. Would You Not Love Allah to Forgive You?

Abu Bakr used to support Mistah ibn Uthathah because he was a relative and was poor. Mistah then took part in spreading the false accusation against 'A'ishah. After Allah revealed her innocence, Abu Bakr swore that he would no longer give him anything. The injury concerned his daughter and her honour, and it had come from someone he had been helping.⁷²

Allah then revealed a command that people of virtue and means should not swear to withhold support from relatives, the needy, and those who had emigrated for

⁷²**The false accusation: Abu Bakr and Zaynab.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Qur'anic Commentary, hadith 4750.

Part of 'A'ishah's extended account. It records Abu Bakr's resumption of support for Mistah after the verse encouraging forgiveness, and Zaynab bint Jahsh's testimony that she knew only good of 'A'ishah. 'A'ishah attributes Zaynab's protection to her careful restraint.

His sake. They were urged to pardon and overlook: “Would you not love Allah to forgive you? And Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Qur’an 24:22] The verse called them not to let the injury prevent kindness, and to forgive in hope of Allah’s forgiveness.

Abu Bakr answered that, by Allah, he did indeed love that Allah should forgive him. He resumed the support he had given Mistah and said that he would never withdraw it again. His hope did not remain a sentiment. It appeared in the money restored and the kindness renewed towards someone who had wronged him. This is the response ‘A’ishah preserved in her account.⁷³

Here we see how hope for forgiveness can help us do something difficult. The wrong was serious, and the response required more than speaking well of tolerance. Abu Bakr heard his Lord’s call and acted. That does not mean forgiveness must remove every trace of pain immediately. A person may begin doing good while still working through the effect of what happened.

We need this lesson in smaller matters too. We disagree with a relative, feel that a kindness has been forgotten, or hear an unworthy remark. There may still be good we can offer, while the self wants to withhold it so the other person feels our worth. Ask whether withholding serves a sound purpose or whether its only aim is to make them hurt as we hurt.

Forgiveness does not require calling injury kindness. A lie remains a lie, and injustice must stop. You may pardon a right that belongs to you while making clear that the conduct must not recur. Mercy does not require altering the facts. It invites us to consider what we can let go of in pursuit of Allah’s pleasure.

Nor should someone enduring continuing harm be pressed to resume an unsafe relationship without protection. Circumstances differ, and lawful claims have their place. Boundaries, trustworthy mediation, or practical help may be necessary. We hope for the virtue of forgiveness where it is appropriate without treating pain as an accusation or applying pressure that increases the harm.

⁷³**The false accusation: Abu Bakr and Zaynab.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Qur’anic Commentary, hadith 4750.

Part of ‘A’ishah’s extended account. It records Abu Bakr’s resumption of support for Mistah after the verse encouraging forgiveness, and Zaynab bint Jahsh’s testimony that she knew only good of ‘A’ishah. ‘A’ishah attributes Zaynab’s protection to her careful restraint.

One obstacle is wanting forgiveness itself to earn a certificate of fine character. We pardon, then repeatedly tell the story so everyone remembers how capable we were of retaliation. If you choose to forgive for Allah, do not turn forgiveness into a new debt of gratitude. The facts may need to be mentioned to protect a right, but repeated retelling solely for praise calls for another examination of purpose.

You may support a relative who later differs with you about a lawful choice. It can be tempting to think that your generosity makes obedience to all your wishes compulsory. Money did not purchase their heart or their decisions. You can advise and request a right you actually possess, but do not use support to compel what they do not owe. Kindness offered for Allah should not become a means of pressure.

The verse's question also recalls our own need: would we not love Allah to forgive us? We have errors we hope He will pardon and failings we hope He will cover. This does not make the wronged person and the wrongdoer equally responsible in every incident. It keeps us from forgetting that we, too, are human, in need of mercy, and capable of mistakes from which we must return.

The first step may be known only to Allah. You refrain from enjoying someone's misfortune, correct a false report about the person who hurt you, or pray for their guidance. In another case, it may be right to restore contact or resume a kindness stopped only out of anger. Choose wisely according to your circumstances, without imposing a dramatic promise you cannot keep.

If you need time, use it to understand rather than accumulate the other person's faults. Consult someone able to be fair to both sides, not someone from whom you demand agreement with all your anger. You may need information you have missed or calm before a decision. Not every delay is weakness, but do not let "needing time" become another name for keeping hostility alive indefinitely.

When you forgive, you need not require every feeling to return to what it once was. There may be justified caution, and trust may need to be rebuilt through repeated conduct. You can refrain from harm, fulfil rights, and offer the kindness appropriate to the situation. Allah knows the effort. You need not describe all you endured to make people acknowledge your generosity.

Abu Bakr's support resumed, and his words remain close to any heart seeking

forgiveness: he loved that Allah should forgive him. May Allah give us a hope that helps us be truthful, fair, and forgiving. May He protect us from wronging others in the name of our pain and from accepting humiliation in the name of tolerance, and guide us to what pleases Him in each situation.

50. Ka'b: Honesty About Falling Short

Ka'b ibn Malik stayed behind from the expedition to Tabuk without a valid excuse. He kept setting out to prepare and returning without having completed his preparations, until the army had left and he remained. When he learned that the Prophet was returning, he considered what he might say, then resolved to tell the truth. He did not choose an explanation that would satisfy the listener while he knew it was false.⁷⁴

He sat before the Messenger of Allah and was asked why he had stayed behind. Ka'b explained that he could have found words to win a listener's approval, but knew that approval obtained through a lie would not help him before Allah. He acknowledged that he had no excuse. The Prophet said that this man had told the truth, and instructed him to rise until Allah judged his case.⁷⁵

The admission was not followed by immediate relief. The Muslims were instructed not to speak to Ka'b and his two companions, and fifty nights passed before Allah revealed that He had accepted their repentance. Then came the glad news, and Ka'b rejoiced. His account preserves the honesty of a man who named his failure and returned from it, rather than using his ability with words to claim an innocence he did not possess.

Truthfulness is not always easy. You may fear blame, the loss of trust, or a

⁷⁴**Ka'b ibn Malik's honesty and repentance.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, chapter 79, hadith 4418.

Ka'b relates staying behind from Tabuk, speaking truthfully, the separation of the three men by the Prophet's instruction, and acceptance of repentance after fifty nights. That particular instruction is not permission for invented personal punishments.

⁷⁵**Ka'b ibn Malik's honesty and repentance.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, chapter 79, hadith 4418.

Ka'b relates staying behind from Tabuk, speaking truthfully, the separation of the three men by the Prophet's instruction, and acceptance of repentance after fifty nights. That particular instruction is not permission for invented personal punishments.

change in someone's treatment. But a lie that removes discomfort briefly leaves you having to protect it and may deny an affected person information they need. When disclosure is required, tell the necessary truth. Fear of the consequences is not permission to mislead.

You may miss a task and find an excuse no one can test. You may delay a right and blame an obstacle when you know that you were careless. Do not become more skilled at explaining failure than at keeping promises. You can acknowledge that you fell short and propose an appropriate correction without insulting yourself or providing details no one needs.

Honesty does not mean telling everyone about every sin Allah has concealed. There are rights that must be restored and explanations required in their proper place; there is also needless disclosure that repairs nothing. Do not confuse the two. Preserve privacy where appropriate, repent to Allah, restore people's rights, and seek informed guidance if you are unsure what must be said or how to say it.

One striking feature of Ka'b's account is that he called the failure what it was. He did not retell it as a wise decision that others misunderstood or find a flattering meaning for the delay. We need that honesty in speaking about ourselves. Some things we did were wrong. Allah's favour is to guide us to repent of them, not to help us give them a more attractive name.

You may fear that people will reduce you to your mistake. Their thoughts are not entirely within your control, but your present honesty is. Explain what is necessary and repair what you can. Do not return to lying because their opinion changes slowly. Trust can take time, and not every relationship is restored by an apology. Truthfulness remains required nonetheless.

The separation ordered by the Prophet in this particular event is not permission to invent personal punishments for everyone who makes a mistake. The incident has its own ruling and setting. Those hearing an admission should join justice with mercy and protect rights through proper means—not use someone's honesty to humiliate or threaten them for the rest of their life.

After admission comes work on the cause. If you procrastinate, take steps that make postponement less likely. If you promise beyond your capacity, become more

careful in your promises. If you rely on others to cover for you, clarify your responsibility. Repentance should not become an intense feeling that ends without any change to the behaviour repeatedly leading you back to the same fault.

Even after returning, someone may speak cruelly of your past. Do not answer with false claims about yourself, and do not despair because some people behave badly. Seek your rights, protect legitimate boundaries, and continue improving. You seek Allah's pleasure. His knowledge of your return is not diminished because someone refuses to acknowledge the change.

Honesty also means distinguishing what you know from what you suspect. Do not confess to unestablished details simply to escape pressure, place your mistake on another person, or accept responsibility for a fault that was not yours. State the truth as you know it and say when something needs checking. Repentance is not built on an inaccurate account, even if the account sounds severe in condemning yourself.

The Prophet's announcement to Ka'b of Allah's acceptance was a great favour known through revelation. We hope for Allah's favour and follow the path of repentance without requiring every situation to end in the same visible way. Some consequences may remain. The possibility of returning has not closed simply because repair requires patience.

Tell the truth you owe, seek forgiveness, and work to fulfil your commitments. Do not wait until admitting the wrong feels effortless. It may remain difficult, yet possible with Allah's help. A person sincerely seeking His pleasure cannot make other people's admiration a permanent justification for lying. Perhaps the nearest thing to correct today is an excuse you know is false and can replace with an honest word.

51. 'Umar: A Gift That Continues

'Umar ibn al-Khattab acquired land at Khaybar that was particularly valuable to him. He went to the Messenger of Allah to ask what he should do with it. The Prophet advised that, if he wished, he could preserve the property itself and give its

yield in charity.⁷⁶ 'Umar retained the land and directed its benefit to good causes. His wish to give was joined with a question about how the good could continue.

The property was not to be sold, given away, or inherited. Its beneficiaries included the poor, relatives, the freeing of enslaved people, service in Allah's cause, travellers, and guests. The narration also allowed its administrator to take a reasonable amount for sustenance without turning it into accumulated private wealth. A good purpose was accompanied by arrangements that protected it from misuse.⁷⁷

This account is a foundation for *waqf*: an endowment in which the underlying asset is preserved and its benefit directed to the designated recipients or purpose. Not every donation is an endowment in the legal sense. The lesson includes recognising that some forms of giving need lasting organisation rather than a moment's enthusiasm. Anyone establishing an endowment needs sound knowledge of its rules and a clear record of the commitments involved.

'Umar's question also brings us close to sincerity. He had property he valued and wanted to do good, yet still asked the Prophet for guidance. The ability to spend does not make learning unnecessary. There may be a need we do not know, a more useful arrangement, or a condition that must be respected. An honest intention welcomes direction even when it changes the first picture we had of a project.

After beginning charitable work, you may find it difficult to share responsibility. Every decision must pass through you; every success must carry your name. Some oversight is required by the trust, but ask how much the work actually needs. People's access to its benefit should not depend on their remaining dependent on your presence in every detail.

Recording the rights protects you and everyone else. State what money has been allocated, who may benefit, who administers it, and the limits of that authority.

⁷⁶**'Umar's endowment at Khaybar.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Conditions, chapter 19, hadith 2737.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. 'Umar consulted the Prophet about his land and was guided to preserve its substance and devote its benefit to charity. The report is foundational for endowments; a particular endowment's terms and documentation require knowledge of its own circumstances.

⁷⁷**'Umar's endowment at Khaybar.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Conditions, chapter 19, hadith 2737.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. 'Umar consulted the Prophet about his land and was guided to preserve its substance and devote its benefit to charity. The report is foundational for endowments; a particular endowment's terms and documentation require knowledge of its own circumstances.

Do not resent questions because your intention is good. People sincerely seeking good can still disagree because their understanding was never made clear. Honest organisation helps preserve affection rather than let ambiguity damage what began with goodwill.

The administrator's trust matters as much as the donor's. Designated money is not personal property to be distributed by preference. An administrator may have an agreed lawful payment, which is not automatically suspicious. The concern is that they perform the duty, take nothing unauthorised, and distinguish their interests from the interests of those whose resources they manage.

Useful continuity can also come through teaching a successor, preserving essential information, and arranging a faithful handover. These actions are not necessarily endowments in the legal sense, but they may help legitimate good continue. Do not hoard knowledge that should be shared to prove that you alone can make the work succeed. Do not prevent someone more capable from providing what people need.

People may differ about putting a donor's name on a project. The name's presence or absence alone does not disclose the intention. Identification may meet a valid need or reflect a right; it may also become a pursuit of fame. Correct your purpose, attribute contributions accurately, and do not insist on a name in a way that harms beneficiaries. Those who participated should not have their efforts erased to make a shared gift look like one person's work.

When a problem emerges, repair it rather than conceal it for the sake of reputation. Public affection for the project does not exempt it from review. A careful disclosure may be needed to protect rights while preserving appropriate confidentiality; not everything needs publication. But silence about a recurring fault that consumes entrusted resources is not loyalty to the good you claim to protect.

Not everyone who wants to give needs a large project. Regular charity from lawful earnings, participation in trustworthy work, or teaching someone may be the good available to you. Choose what you can sustain without losing an obligation. Do not borrow to appear the founder of something impressive, and do not despise a modest contribution you can make faithfully over time.

Continuing benefit may require reviewing changing needs. A particular use may once have been suitable and later become less so. Seek qualified religious and practical advice about what adjustments are permitted. Do not redirect restricted resources merely because another idea appeals to you, or persist in an evident mistake to protect your original plan. A sound intention seeks what is right and accepts correction.

Learn also to be happy with good after it leaves your hands. If another trustworthy person takes responsibility and serves it well, thank Allah. If beneficiaries never learn your name, do not regret giving on that account. What you offered for Allah does not need to be remembered by every recipient for you to hope for His reward.

‘Umar asked about property he loved, and it became a continuing benefit whose reward he sought from Allah. Ask what you can best do with the time, money, or knowledge before you. Choose carefully, protect the trust, and seek informed help. A fine beginning does not replace faithful continuation. We ask Allah to accept what we offer and let its good continue benefiting His servants.

52. Justice Towards Those We Dislike

Allah says, “Do not let hatred of a people lead you to be unjust. Be just; that is nearer to mindfulness of Allah.” [Qur’an 5:8] Disagreement, anger, or hatred of an action does not permit lying about its doer or depriving them of a right. The command to act fairly is not limited to people whose company we enjoy.

Judgement and testimony can therefore test sincerity. You say that you seek Allah’s pleasure, then find that the right in this case belongs to someone you dislike. Will you preserve it, or look for a reason not to acknowledge it? Supporting justice can be easy when it serves us. Our honesty is tested more sharply when it requires what our preference resists.

Suppose you witness a dispute involving a relative. You know that your relative was wrong about a particular matter, but they expect you to support them. Love does not permit false testimony. You can care for them, help them make restitution

or apologise, and remain truthful about what you know. Supporting a relative is not the same as allowing them to wrong someone while providing an excuse based on kinship.

Justice does not mean distributing blame equally so that the discussion sounds balanced. One person may be wronging the other; do not invent a fault in the victim merely to calm the gathering. Someone may also be mistaken on one point and correct on another. Preserve both facts. Their correct point should not be erased, and it should not conceal a different error that needs repair.

At work, you may assess a colleague who has angered you. Attend to the relevant evidence: quality, reliability, cooperation, and established events. Do not change an evaluation to retaliate for a remark you disliked. If anger makes fairness difficult, seek an impartial review. Responsibility does not authorise using another person's livelihood to settle your grievance.

We may quickly believe a damaging report about an opponent, then discover that the source is unreliable and still look for a way to keep the story alive. Stop there. A report does not become true because you wish it were. Remove what has not been established and correct what you shared. Other faults do not make the person deserving of a false accusation.

Religious disagreement especially requires knowledge and fairness. Represent a statement accurately and understand the argument before responding. Do not assign an intention you cannot know. The view may be wrong and require correction, but correction needs no extra cruelty. Defending truth is not a matter of choosing words because the people on our side will applaud them.

Fairness does not prevent protecting someone being harmed. The aim is not superficial calm while the injury continues. Identify the established harm, work through lawful means to stop it, and protect those unable to defend themselves. Mercy towards an aggressor does not release them from justice, just as restraining aggression does not permit retaliation beyond what is right.

Some decisions and messages written in anger can wait until we are calmer. Do not send everything in your first draft. Read it and ask whether it contains an unchecked claim, harms someone unrelated to the matter, or adds a description

you would reject if used about you. A brief pause may prevent an injustice that would later require apology and correction.

Urgent protection, however, should not be postponed merely until you feel calm. If you can rightly prevent present harm, act. The purpose is to keep anger within proper limits, not to make you indecisive about a clear duty. Where a decision requires expertise or authority, turn to those qualified rather than take a matter beyond your competence into your own hands.

Truthfulness includes changing your view when new information appears. Your first judgement is not a pledge you must defend forever. Explain that the facts have changed your understanding and correct what depended on the earlier account. People who want you to win every argument may dislike this; those who want your good should be glad you did not put appearance ahead of truth.

Do not extend a dispute to someone's family and companions. Their spouse, children, or colleagues may have no part in the wrong. Preserve each person's rights. The number of people hurt by your response is not a measure of strength. Strength in faith is shown by remaining within what is right, not by reaching the widest possible circle with harm.

The person you advise may be dissatisfied, and someone you expected to thank you may not do so. Neither reaction alone proves that you were right or wrong. Revisit the evidence and accept correction when warranted. Sincerity does not make your judgement infallible. It asks you to seek the truth honestly and be humble before what becomes clear.

When angry, remember that you remain Allah's servant and that the person you oppose retains rights your anger cannot cancel. Speak truthfully, do not exceed a justified response, and do not withhold an obligatory good. May Allah keep our love and dislike within obedience to Him and help us be fair when fairness is hard. In such moments, we need His help more than a brilliant reply.

53. Honesty in Buying and Selling

The Messenger of Allah passed a heap of food offered for sale and put his hand into it. His fingers reached something wet. When he asked, the seller explained that rain had fallen on it. The Prophet asked why the wet portion had not been placed on top so people could see it, then warned, “Whoever cheats is not of me.”⁷⁸ A good-looking surface was not enough when a concealed defect mattered to the buyer.

The lesson in honesty is plain. A buyer decides on the basis of what they know. We should not deliberately show the attractive portion and hide something that affects their choice. An advertisement may contain no individually false sentence and still create a misleading impression through what it withholds. Honesty concerns the transaction itself, not merely polished wording.

Earning a lawful profit is a legitimate purpose. A trader may profit, a worker receive payment, and a buyer seek something suited to their needs. But profit does not permit deception, just as a desire to buy cheaply does not permit lying. Seeking sincerity at work includes refusing to make livelihood an excuse to disobey the One from whom we seek that livelihood.

You may know of a defect that a quick inspection will miss. You tell yourself that the buyer did not ask or that other sellers do not disclose such things. Neither excuse removes a disclosure that is required. Explain what must be explained and ask about details whose ruling you do not know. Another person’s inexperience is not an opportunity to obtain agreement on a false understanding.

Services can be misrepresented too. You promise a result you cannot guarantee or a deadline you know is unlikely, then describe the promise as optimism. Be hopeful, but distinguish a commitment from an aspiration. Another person may arrange their affairs around your words. Your favourable expectation does not repair harm caused by a promise you knew had no sound basis.

⁷⁸ **Wet food and concealed defects.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Faith, hadith 102.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The Prophet found moisture inside the heap of food and asked why it had not been placed on top for people to see, then warned against cheating.

Respect the meaning of commercial language. Do not write “guaranteed” and later treat the guarantee as a casual courtesy. Do not advertise a benefit most buyers will not receive without explaining its conditions. An offer can be appealing and truthful at the same time. Something that needs deception to succeed needs its substance or method improved, not a religious justification.

An employee may be told to make a claim they believe is false and fear losing their job if they object. That is a difficulty requiring care and informed advice; it does not make lying permissible without limit. Seek truthful wording, discuss the concern with the responsible person, and consult someone who understands both the duty and the circumstances. Do not make a reckless decision based on ignorance of the situation, or surrender to the belief that lawful conduct is impossible.

The buyer also owes honesty. Do not claim a defect you caused, deny receiving something you received, or exploit a seller’s concern for reputation to take what is not yours. A large company’s resources do not make its property permissible to take, and financial hardship does not turn a false claim into a right. We seek fairness on both sides of the transaction.

When complaining, describe what happened as accurately as you can. You may pursue a right and report harm, but do not add something that never occurred to make your voice louder. A person wronged in the original matter can still wrong someone through exaggeration. Distinguish established facts from suspicion, and preserve the information needed for a truthful claim.

The prophetic incident includes inspection and identification of a fault. We should not reject quality controls by pointing to the good character of staff. People forget and make mistakes, and profit can tempt them into carelessness. Procedures that reveal defects and protect customers support trustworthiness. Claims that we mean well cannot replace them.

A trader may lose a sale by revealing a defect. We should not present truthfulness as a technique guaranteed to bring a larger profit that very day. It is obedience and fulfilment of a right, and we seek its blessing from Allah. If an immediate gain does not appear, cheating has not become correct. A servant does not abandon Allah’s command whenever disobedience seems more profitable in the short term.

You can improve the product, repair its weakness, and develop the service. Honesty is not acceptance of poor quality. It encourages improving reality instead of merely improving how reality is described. Learn what people need, fulfil what you can promise, and decline what you cannot provide. Success resting on clear rights is better than approval obtained from a buyer who never learned what was concealed.

If a matter requiring correction appears after the sale, take the appropriate steps to remove the harm. Do not wait for a complaint when you already know. Depending on the agreement and situation, explanation, repair, or repayment may be required. Ask and fulfil what is owed. Sincere repentance from deception should make the harmed person's right matter more to you than preventing embarrassment.

The seller was told to place the wet food where buyers could see it. Some hidden things must be made visible because others have a right to know them. Concealing a good deed is not like concealing a defect in a transaction. We worship Allah alone, tell the truth in obedience to Him, and ask Him for wholesome provision unmixed with a right taken through deception.

54. Zaynab: A Fair Word About a Rival

During the false accusation against 'A'ishah, the Prophet asked Zaynab bint Jahsh what she knew or had seen. She replied that she would guard her hearing and sight, and that she knew nothing but good. 'A'ishah described Zaynab as a wife whose standing rivalled her own, then said that Allah had protected her through her careful restraint.⁷⁹

Rivalry did not become a reason to speak without knowledge. Zaynab guarded her testimony and added no accusation merely because the moment allowed it. Here, careful restraint—*wara'*—has a clear meaning: holding yourself back from

⁷⁹**The false accusation: Abu Bakr and Zaynab.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Qur'anic Commentary, hadith 4750.

Part of 'A'ishah's extended account. It records Abu Bakr's resumption of support for Mistah after the verse encouraging forgiveness, and Zaynab bint Jahsh's testimony that she knew only good of 'A'ishah. 'A'ishah attributes Zaynab's protection to her careful restraint.

what you fear may be sinful and stopping at what you know, even when speaking about someone with whom you compete.

A similar moral test may arise when you are asked about a colleague competing for an opportunity or a relative with whom you have disagreed. The listeners may be ready to believe something damaging. You can speak fairly from knowledge or exploit the question to plant an unsupported suspicion. Sincerity in that moment means choosing the truth rather than the advantage gained by discrediting someone.

Harm can be caused through insinuation without a direct charge. You say that you would rather not speak or that you know things you do not wish to mention, although you have no grounds for the dark impression those words create. There are genuine secrets that must be kept. Do not borrow the language of discretion to make people suspect a wrong you do not know occurred.

Zaynab's words also distinguish hearing from knowing. Repetition does not turn a rumour into testimony you are entitled to give. Where there is a genuine reason to mention it, make clear that it is an unverified report, not an established event. Where there is neither need nor evidence, leaving the subject alone may better protect your faith and the person's honour.

A person may welcome a rival's downfall without examining how it happened. If it arose through injustice or falsehood, the benefit you receive does not justify silence where clarification is required. You may need to correct what you know, even if doing so costs an opportunity the error would have brought you. Allah's pleasure is not sought by taking advantage of a wrong you recognise.

In scholarly disagreement, preserve what the other person actually said. Do not assign the worst possible meaning when the statement needs clarification. You can criticise an argument with evidence without adding words or claims its speaker never made. A sincere desire for truth should leave you willing to discover that an opponent was correct about something you had thought mistaken.

A discussion can gradually become a desire to win, with responses that add no understanding. Ask whether a truth still needs explaining or whether you merely want the final word. You can end respectfully once the disagreement is clear.

Silence is not always defeat, and another reply is not always proof of a stronger argument or a better intention.

Within families, affection should not be conditional on agreement about every permissible choice. A relative may choose something you would not prefer without becoming disobedient or ungrateful for every kindness. Advise according to knowledge and preserve their right to choose where that right is theirs. Advice for Allah does not make other people's decisions our property because we love them.

A dispute may last so long that hostility becomes habitual and we forget its beginning. The Sunnah warns of estrangement that causes the matter of the two people in dispute to be deferred until they reconcile.⁸⁰ We should examine enmity sustained merely by pride or embarrassment about taking the first step. At the same time, boundaries needed for protection remain valid. Not every protective distance is blameworthy hostility.

Reconciliation may begin by stopping a harmful remark or fulfilling a right without first agreeing on every interpretation of the past. A trustworthy mediator may help. Do not make the other person's complete acceptance of your account a condition that prevents all improvement. Equally, do not accept an arrangement that leaves ongoing injustice untouched. Seek a fair way in which harm decreases and rights are fulfilled.

We should be glad to see fairness practised by others. When someone protects a rival's right, learn from the deed and thank them for what you observed without pronouncing on their hidden heart. Let their action remind you of what you can do. Honesty during competition should become familiar conduct, not only an exceptional story we admire and forget.

The same account contains 'A'ishah's fairness towards Zaynab. Despite their rivalry, she preserved the story of Zaynab's restraint and gave her its due. Loyalty to truth means not erasing the good of someone who differed with us or retelling a relationship as though it contained nothing but injury. Testimony should not be

⁸⁰ **Hostility and deferred forgiveness.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2565.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The matter of people maintaining hostility is deferred until reconciliation. Blameworthy estrangement should not be confused with legitimate protection from continuing harm or a just claim for a right.

edited according to what is comfortable for the self.

“I guard my hearing and my sight.” Her words ask us to protect what we claim to know. Before speaking about someone, stay within the facts and do not add something to gain an advantage. May Allah give us tongues that rivalry cannot lead into lying, and hearts more concerned with people’s guidance and fair treatment than with moving ahead of them.

55. A Position Is a Trust

Abu Dharr asked the Prophet whether he would appoint him to an office. The Prophet told him that he was weak for that responsibility and that authority was a trust which would bring disgrace and regret on the Day of Judgement, except for someone who took it rightly and fulfilled its obligations.⁸¹ This was not a denial of Abu Dharr’s virtues. It was honest advice about a duty for which good character alone, without the necessary capacity, was insufficient.

We may view a position as recognition we deserve and overlook the rights attached to it. We enjoy being listened to without thinking as carefully about who will suffer if we are wrong. The hadith returns us to the starting point: before a position is status, it is a trust. Accepting it requires knowledge, ability, fairness, and an understanding of what will be asked of us.

Not every good person suits every task, and not being selected is not proof of lesser virtue. Someone may teach well but lack administrative ability, or offer honest advice while needing experience in finance. Recognising this does not diminish them. Caring for someone includes helping them serve where they are capable, not flattering them with a responsibility that puts other people’s rights at risk.

When you want a role, ask how well you understand its demands. Can you protect rights, decide responsibly, receive correction, and give it the necessary time? Or do you know mainly the visibility it would bring? The rulings on seeking and

⁸¹ **The trust of authority.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Leadership, hadith 1825.

Narrated by Abu Dharr. The Prophet warned him of his weakness for the responsibility and the seriousness of the trust, excepting those who take it rightly and fulfil its duties. Personal goodness alone does not make someone suited to every appointment.

accepting office differ with circumstances and need; we should not judge every desire identically. But the trust must come before wanting to be known as the person in charge.

Declining may be right when you recognise a genuine inability. Do not be ashamed to state your limits, or assume that everyone who accepts work is better than someone who declines. Conversely, do not rename fear of criticism “humility” when you can fulfil a duty and are genuinely needed. Seek knowledge and advice, and be truthful about why you decide.

If you take responsibility, make it possible for others to tell you the truth. Do not reward those who beautify every opinion you hold while punishing those who identify a problem. An adviser may be mistaken in some details, but a safe route for review protects you from errors you cannot see. Not all criticism is envy, and not all agreement is honest affection.

Distinguish the work’s interests from your own. A decision may enlarge your influence while needlessly burdening the people you serve. Explain its reasons, listen to those affected, and reconsider what can be reconsidered. Saying that you mean well is not enough. There must be sound reasons, protected rights, and a willingness to return when an error becomes clear.

When choosing helpers, do not substitute kinship or personal comfort for competence. You may love someone who is unsuited to the task, while a person with whom you disagree elsewhere may perform it better. Be fair according to the work’s requirements. Honouring someone you love does not mean placing in their hands a trust that overwhelms them and harms those awaiting its fulfilment.

Praise may reach you while an affected person’s complaint does not. Ask about those absent from the meetings: the applicant who has waited too long, the worker afraid to object, and the claimant who cannot find a route to you. The success of a responsibility is not measured only by the number of admirers. Some failures become visible only when someone genuinely asks about the vulnerable.

If a decision was wrong, do not place every consequence on the people who carried it out. Explain your own responsibility, correct the decision, and restore the harmed person’s right. Others may need to be held accountable, but accountability

should not become a shield protecting your name from every mistake. A leader seeking Allah's pleasure accepts their part in failure as readily as their part in success.

A time may come to leave the position. If remaining is genuinely more useful, explain that honestly. If someone else is more capable or your commitment has ended, hand over faithfully. Losing a title does not erase your worth. Do not wish a successor to fail so people will recognise your value. Good you loved for Allah should still please you when it continues after you.

A less visible role may feel difficult at first. Recognise that feeling without letting it govern the handover. Take time to adjust and look for useful work within your ability. Pain does not justify withholding essential information or obstructing a successor. The trust remains yours to fulfil on the last day as well as the first.

These lessons belong in smaller responsibilities too: caring for a household, organising volunteers, managing shared money, or arranging a trip with friends. Whenever another person's right depends on you, ask what you can fulfil. Do not dismiss a trust because it seems small or become more interested in its title than its beneficiaries. Faithful service where you are may be better than seeking a larger role you cannot perform well.

The Prophet advised Abu Dharr with concern for him and for the people. May our advice to ourselves and those we love have the same honesty. Before asking why we were not chosen, ask what right we are able to fulfil. We may find a more useful and safer place to serve Allah without making our contentment depend on a position that can be given and later taken away.

56. Do Not Claim to Know the Heart

During a battle, Usamah ibn Zayd killed a man who had said, "There is no god but Allah." When the matter was reported, the Prophet strongly rebuked him. Usamah said that the man had only spoken from fear of the weapon. The Messenger of Allah asked whether he had opened the man's heart to know what lay within it,

and repeated the question until Usamah was deeply distressed.⁸²

The incident has a grave bearing on the sanctity of life and respecting a person's outward profession of Islam. It also shows the danger of treating a suspicion about intention as knowledge that permits aggression. Circumstances may help us understand conduct, but they do not give us ownership of hearts. Allah truly knows their contents. We must not exceed what we know when judging people.

Learning about showing off should make us more careful with our intentions, not quicker to accuse others. We may call the person who publishes a donation insincere and the person who keeps it hidden miserly. No one can escape such reasoning, because every action is fitted to a suspicion we already hold. Ask for facts where facts are needed and accept that much of another person's life remains unknown to you.

Declining to judge the heart does not mean refusing to judge conduct. Established cheating, harm, or lying should be addressed appropriately. A wrongdoer cannot prevent accountability merely by saying that no one knows their intention. Their purpose may differ from our guess, but the harmed person's right remains. Address the known action and require repair without adding an unsupported accusation about its hidden motive.

Imagine that a relative did not visit when you needed them. You may be hurt without knowing everything that prevented the visit. Ask gently if necessary and explain your need. Do not begin by declaring that they do not love you or consider themselves superior. A real failure may emerge that deserves discussion; so may an excuse you had never considered. Give knowledge a chance before certainty about someone's purpose.

Someone whose past contained shortcomings may begin to change. Do not hold them permanently to their earlier image. Treat their present conduct fairly and hope for their good. If you have unresolved rights or experience calling for caution, protect those through proper means. You can acknowledge the possibility

⁸²**The limits of judging hidden intentions.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Faith, hadith 96.

Narrated by Usamah ibn Zayd. The Prophet rebuked him for killing a man who had professed that there is no god but Allah and asked whether he had opened the man's heart to know what lay within it.

of sincere repentance without surrendering legitimate safeguards.

Likewise, a public declaration of repentance neither guarantees honesty nor proves deception because we suspect it. We deal with what is apparent and preserve rights. It may be unwise immediately to return a trust that someone previously betrayed. That is a decision about protecting rights in light of evidence, not a final judgement that their heart cannot seek Allah. Responsible caution is different from closing repentance to people.

Praise needs the same restraint. You may see kindness, thank its doer, and pray for them. But do not claim certain knowledge that they wanted nothing except Allah or that their deed has unquestionably been accepted. The Prophet taught us to speak in terms of what we reasonably consider and not certify anyone before Allah.⁸³ This preserves appreciation without claiming access to what is hidden.

Love for a scholar or teacher can become so strong that we reject every observation about them. We benefit from their knowledge and recognise their service, but they remain human and can err. Establishing an error with evidence does not require condemning their intention; finding one error does not justify erasing all their good. Fair love protects us from excess, and fair disagreement protects us from injustice.

When advising about sincerity, begin from our shared need to improve. You can discuss a purpose someone has expressly stated or a method containing unnecessary display without asserting that you know they acted only for praise. A truthful, gentle reminder may help more than an accusation that leaves them defending themselves instead of considering the advice.

Do not use entrusted confidences as ammunition in a later dispute. Someone who told you of a struggle with showing off in order to seek help did not authorise future exposure. Preserve the trust and advise responsibly. Necessary disclosure to protect a right or prevent harm must follow its proper limits, not the desire for revenge.

⁸³ **Care in praising people.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 3000.

Narrated by Abu Bakrah. A person offering praise should express what they reasonably consider on the basis of knowledge, leaving the final reckoning to Allah and not certifying anyone before Him.

Preoccupation with someone else's intention may also distract us from our own duty. We debate the sincerity of the person advising us instead of considering whether the advice is sound. We examine a creditor's heart instead of repaying the debt. Return to the action required of you. Even if another person's purpose were wrong, that would not cancel your obligation or make injustice permissible.

We need not become gullible to be fair or suspicious of every heart to protect rights. Check facts, keep records, seek guidance, and weigh evidence appropriately. Then stop where knowledge stops. A heart seeking Allah's pleasure need not be ashamed to say that it does not know someone's intention. It can still say clearly that a particular action is wrong or a particular right must be fulfilled.

Leave hidden hearts to their Lord and attend to what you know of yourself. You have an intention to renew, words to guard, and a trust to fulfil. This does not prevent advice or resistance to injustice. It makes advice fairer and resistance less likely to become another wrong. May Allah improve our hearts and keep our tongues from accusations we cannot establish and praise we are not entitled to certify.

Part Eight: Learning to Serve Sincerely

When we read about righteous people, we may notice what made them known and overlook the deeds through which they hoped for Allah's pleasure in ordinary days and nights: prayer carefully maintained, kindness towards a mother, learning that helped them attend to intention, and supplication for help. These are possibilities near to us, although people differ in their sincerity and effort.

We need to learn how to act from their example rather than remain satisfied with admiration. We have deeds to improve, obligations to preserve, and faults from which we can repent. By Allah's mercy, obedience does not require a well-known name or a past free from shortcomings.

57. Bilal: A Deed He Hoped Would Be Accepted

At the time of the dawn prayer, the Prophet asked Bilal which deed in Islam gave him the greatest hope, for he had heard the sound of Bilal's footsteps before him in Paradise. Bilal answered that whenever he purified himself, by night or by day, he prayed with that purification whatever prayer had been granted to him to pray.⁸⁴ Asked about a deed whose reward he hoped for, he described a prayer he regularly performed.

Bilal gave no lengthy account of himself. He stated what he did: he purified himself, then prayed. Worship becomes close and practical in this answer. Not

⁸⁴ **Bilal's prayer after purification.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter 17, hadith 1149.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Asked which deed gave him the greatest hope, Bilal described praying after purification as much as he was enabled to pray. This report does not specify a new compulsory number for every Muslim.

every avenue of good is beyond most people's reach. You may already know a prescribed deed and its virtue, and need to perform it consistently rather than keep looking for something different.

The question about what gave him the greatest hope also teaches an attitude towards our deeds. We work and hope; we do not claim for ourselves knowledge we have not been given. Asking which action you hope will benefit you before Allah should encourage care for that action, not self-admiration. Hope in Allah can accompany awareness of shortcomings and lead to further obedience.

Someone known for a public role may have other good that people rarely consider. Bilal was the Messenger of Allah's caller to prayer; here he speaks about prayer after purification. We cannot confine a person's life to the part by which we know them. More useful is to ask about ourselves: do we care for worship when we are not occupying a role or being noticed?

After preserving the obligatory duties, choose voluntary acts you can sustain. They may include prescribed prayer, recitation, charity, or established remembrance. Learn the ruling and manner of the act, then take on what you can manage. A deed need not be large to become a source of hope. Nor should an obligation be left because you are occupied with voluntary worship you particularly enjoy.

This narration does not prescribe a new number of units for every reader or give everyone performing the act Bilal's particular glad news. His distinction is what the Prophet told us. We may follow his care for good and hope for Allah's favour without claiming his rank or a revelation about ourselves. Loving righteous people means benefiting from their example, not awarding ourselves every distinction they received.

You may begin enthusiastically and later miss a practice one day. Return when you can rather than let one omission become a reason to abandon it entirely. Steadiness requires patience with yourself and a realistic arrangement of time. Taking on so much that exhaustion eventually drives you away is not the constancy we are trying to learn.

Look for opportunities already near your daily life. After prayer, there may be a little time for remembrance. A quiet interval at home may allow reading.

When spending on yourself, you may be able to set something aside for a person in need. These are not newly prescribed religious appointments. They are ordinary opportunities you recognise and use well.

Worship does not require a continuing announcement to keep it alive. Perhaps you have become accustomed to telling friends about every increase in practice, until your energy depends on their encouragement. Encouragement is welcome, but allow yourself some good that you do even when no one asks. Know what you seek, ask Allah for help, and be glad that obedience was made possible without requiring others to describe you by it.

You may still need help to remain steady. Good companionship, questions to knowledgeable people, and reminders can all be valuable. Take the help you need without turning worship into a contest of numbers or an ongoing account of superiority. Its standing before Allah cannot be calculated from what people display in conversation.

Bilal's answer also shows that mentioning a deed is not always showing off. The Prophet asked and Bilal answered, leaving something useful for Muslims to learn. You may explain an act when seeking a ruling or teaching someone. Be truthful and say what is needed. Purpose and need matter: neither conceal a beneficial answer automatically nor expand it beyond what the situation requires.

Some good comes easily to you, while other duties need more effort. You may enjoy giving but struggle to restrain speech, or enjoy reading while delaying service to your family. Recognise a strength and thank Allah; recognise a shortcoming and work on it. The good you love can help you, but it does not excuse the duty you find difficult.

When enabled to do a deed, remember your need for acceptance. You may maintain its outward form while still needing Allah to improve its intention and forgive its faults. Asking Him recalls that His favour preceded your effort. It is good to love obedience and remain grateful in it rather than become impressed with yourself.

Bilal's account leaves us with something we can put into practice: a known, sound deed, an honest purpose, hope in Allah, and continuity within our capacity.

Do not wait for fame or a judgement about your own rank. Learn what benefits you, do the good within reach, and maintain worship through which you hope in your Lord, asking Him to accept it.

58. Uways: Kindness Far from Fame

'Umar ibn al-Khattab used to ask arrivals from Yemen about Uways ibn 'Amir. When they met, he asked about details the Prophet had described and whether Uways had a mother. Uways said that he did. 'Umar then related what the Prophet had said of him, including that he was devoted to his mother, and the instruction to ask Uways to seek forgiveness for him if he could meet him.⁸⁵

'Umar asked, and Uways prayed for his forgiveness. The leader of the believers requested supplication from a man whose standing many people did not recognise, because the Messenger of Allah had spoken of his virtue. Reputation is plainly not enough to measure a person's place before Allah. We may know a name without knowing the deeds, or overlook someone in whom there is considerable good.

'Umar asked where Uways intended to go. He answered that he was going to Kufah. 'Umar offered to write to its governor on his behalf, and Uways replied that he preferred to remain among ordinary people.⁸⁶ That is what the report establishes: he chose not to request a letter to the governor. We should not claim knowledge of his hidden motive beyond the wording of the report; inner intentions belong to Allah. Nor does the account imply that accepting lawful assistance necessarily harms a person's sincerity.

Uways belonged to the generation after the Companions; he was not himself a Companion. The Prophet's description of his kindness to his mother calls attention

⁸⁵**Uways and his mother.**

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Virtues of the Companions, hadith 2542.

Usayr ibn Jabir relates the account concerning 'Umar: Uways's care for his mother, 'Umar's request for his prayer for forgiveness, and Uways's preference not to seek an introduction to the governor of Kufah. Uways belonged to the generation after the Companions.

⁸⁶**Uways and his mother.**

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Virtues of the Companions, hadith 2542.

Usayr ibn Jabir relates the account concerning 'Umar: Uways's care for his mother, 'Umar's request for his prayer for forgiveness, and Uways's preference not to seek an introduction to the governor of Kufah. Uways belonged to the generation after the Companions.

to a duty close to home. We may search for what makes someone remarkable publicly while part of their good lies in patient service, a parent cared for, and kindness performed at home without applause.

Consider that care for his mother. How often do we look far away for a meaningful deed while a father or mother nearby needs a gentle word, assistance, and patience? A new project gives us a feeling of achievement. A repeated household request may no longer seem significant. Repeated kindness needs sincerity too, because the effort returns while thanks may not.

Your mother may ask the same question several times. Your father may need something arranged that no one else knows about. Do not dismiss the service because it is familiar. Do it as well as you can and remember their rights. You need not pretend never to be tired. Try not to turn tiredness into humiliation or a constant reminder of everything you have done for them.

Kindness to parents should be guided by knowledge and fairness. No one is obeyed in disobedience to Allah, and caring for a parent does not mean abandoning every other duty. Responsibilities may need to be shared with siblings, outside help sought, or limits explained. Be sincere in wanting good, and choose a gentle manner and an arrangement that preserves rights.

People may know your public work and have no idea what you carry at home. Their ignorance is no reason to think your life lacks useful deeds. Nursing someone, keeping an elder company, and meeting a need are acts in which you can seek reward. They take real time, but it is not wasted time merely because it does not make you known.

Equally, do not reduce Uways's story to a claim that the sincere person is necessarily unknown. 'Umar was widely known, and he was the one requesting the prayer. Both men had virtues. 'Umar's fame did not keep him from humbly acting on the prophetic instruction, and Uways did not need to pursue fame. Their obedience united them despite the difference in public recognition.

You may meet someone quiet and of modest circumstances. Do not hurry to dismiss them. Treat them according to their rights as a person and a Muslim, not according to how influential you imagine they are among your friends. At the

same time, modest appearance does not certify a pure heart. Allah knows what is hidden. Your duty is to speak and act fairly and recognise the limits of your own view.

Some good of yours may become known without your seeking it. Thank Allah, remain courteous, and do not begin performing a new identity suited to the praise. Continue your work, accept needed advice, and admit what you do not know. After praise, you still need the same care for your heart that you needed before it.

When choosing privacy, let it protect your purpose rather than build a reputation for not seeking a reputation. Praise for humility can tempt us just as praise for learning can. Reduce unnecessary talk about yourself and attend to useful work. Telling everyone how much you love being unknown is not the same as leaving recognition alone.

Revisit a kindness you may have overlooked: a call to check on your parents, a task completed without hurtful complaint, an excuse accepted, or time spent listening. Do not turn it into a programme for displaying your goodness or postpone it until a special occasion. Their need for your presence today may matter more than a large promise repeatedly offered from a distance.

May Allah give us kindness unspoiled by reminders, humility through which we do not seek admiration, and honesty that remains in both recognition and obscurity. We need deeds through which to hope in Him whether anyone knows their name or not. When He makes caring for your parents possible, recognise the blessing, do what you can, and ask for acceptance.

59. Ibn Rajab: Understanding Intention

You may feel unsure how to correct your intention while readily understanding your purposes in other matters. You know that you are going to visit an ill person rather than shop, or returning a loan rather than giving a present. Intention is not foreign to daily life. It is what you mean to do and what you seek through doing it. Caring for it means bringing that purpose into agreement with what Allah loves.

In explaining the hadith about intentions, Ibn Rajab identifies two uses of the

term: distinguishing acts of worship from one another, and distinguishing the one for whom a deed is performed.⁸⁷ Your intention distinguishes an obligatory act from a voluntary one. You then also ask for whom you are worshipping: do you seek Allah's pleasure or people's praise? The distinction makes the subject clearer and easier to apply.

In the first sense, you know the prayer you have begun or the fast you are observing. You do not have to search for an elaborate verbal formula to create the intention. The purpose is in your heart, as you know why you left the house. If a particular religious ruling is unclear, learn it rather than let uncertainty about one detail become doubt about every act of worship.

In the second sense, honesty with yourself is needed. You may give the same sum twice: once hoping in Allah, another time primarily wanting to be called generous. The hand gives on both occasions, but the motive differs. That is why the appearance of the deed is not enough. People see the gift; your Lord knows what you intended.

Caring for intention does not mean finding an accusation in every natural feeling. You can love your family and seek reward for supporting them, or enjoy a friend's company while hoping for reward in visiting. Affection does not automatically make the action showing off. Distinguish lawful desires accompanying obedience from using worship to secure a standing among people. Judgements become confused when different things are treated as identical.

Ibn Rajab quotes Sufyan al-Thawri as saying that nothing he had struggled with was harder than his intention, because it kept changing on him.⁸⁸ Ibn Rajab also notes a variation in the wording of some transmitted versions. The lesson here

⁸⁷**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

⁸⁸**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

is the sustained struggle to keep intention sound, not dependence on one isolated wording. This acknowledges the need for effort; it does not invite abandoning the work. You may recognise your purpose today and need to attend to it tomorrow, especially when praise or competition arrives. Return to Allah and correct what you recognise. Repeated need is not a reason for despair.

You begin teaching a child because you want to help. Praise increases, and you find yourself more concerned with the compliments than the child's understanding. The correction has a practical form: attend again to the child's need, accept another teacher if that would help more, and stop exaggerating your contribution. Reviewing intention is not a separate conversation detached from decisions. It appears in such choices.

Understanding intention also helps you recognise good within ordinary routines. You work to provide lawfully, eat to strengthen yourself, and sleep to rest and fulfil your responsibilities. You can hope for reward through a sound purpose in a permissible action without manufacturing a speech before every movement. Remembering what pleases Allah in daily life encourages better choices and better conduct.

A good intention does not, however, make a forbidden method right. Giving someone else's money without entitlement does not become obedience because a poor person benefits. Lying to protect an individual or a project is not excused by saying that the objective is to serve good. We need both a sound purpose and a sound act, just as prayer requires intention and proper observance.

A thought of showing off may arise and be disliked and resisted. That is not the same as beginning worship for praise or accepting the desire and following it. Ibn Rajab distinguishes a resisted thought from something entertained and acted upon.⁸⁹ Do not punish the struggle itself by abandoning worship. Resist the thought, complete what you began, and ask Allah to help you be sincere.

⁸⁹**The meanings and changing circumstances of intention.**

Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, commentary on the first hadith, "Deeds are according to intentions."

The commentary distinguishes actions and the one sought through them, discusses intrusive showing off and resistance to it, purposes accompanying a deed, and happiness in subsequent praise. It also transmits Sufyan al-Thawri's words about struggling with intention.

When you need a ruling, describe the situation instead of asking for a certificate about your heart. Explain the purpose with which you began, what happened later, or the particular form of the action. The answer may help you make a clear decision. No one can give you an absolute verdict that every part of your intention is pure.

Useful knowledge should reduce confusion, not multiply endless doubt. Once you understand a matter and act accordingly, continue. Learn when a new issue arises and correct a known fault. Do not make every completed prayer the subject of a lengthy investigation or give imagination permission to reopen past deeds without a sound reason.

Consider one action you intend to do. What is it? Is it right? What good do you hope for through it? Answer with simple honesty, then perform it well. It may be a donation, a visit, a work responsibility, or family care. Intention does not need eloquence. It needs your actions to agree with what you know is right and your willingness to return when you drift from it.

This is part of what Ibn Rajab's explanation helps us learn: understand intention in order to act, and distinguish its different situations so that neither carelessness nor excess wrongs us. Sound knowledge helps sincerity, and sincerity encourages the search for useful knowledge. Do more than memorise the explanation. Improve the purpose and manner of the next deed and ask Allah to make it for Him alone.

60. Ibn Taymiyyah: Worshipping Allah and Seeking His Help

Ibn Taymiyyah defines worship as a comprehensive term for everything Allah loves and approves of in inward and outward words and deeds.⁹⁰ It includes bodily actions as well as love of Allah, fear, hope, and sincerity within the heart. Worship

⁹⁰**The breadth of worship.**

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-'Ubuliyyah*, in *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, volume 10, on the meaning and forms of worship and the reality of servanthood.

The opening defines worship and includes inward and outward deeds, their connection to love of Allah, obedience to Him, and sincerity in serving Him.

is therefore not confined to the mosque, and a sound heart cannot be separated from honesty, trustworthiness, and kindness towards people.

Alongside prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage, he lists familiar duties: truthful speech, fulfilling trusts, kindness to parents, maintaining family ties, keeping promises, and caring for neighbours and vulnerable people.⁹¹ This gives ordinary service its proper place. Hours spent caring for family or completing a duty may be hours in which you seek reward through obedience to your Lord.

Knowing this changes how we view an ordinary day. Permissible work performed faithfully is not detached from religion, and home is not where concern for worship ends. Acts of worship differ in their rulings and degrees, but they encompass what Allah loves in our speech and conduct. Understanding that encourages improvement in familiar tasks rather than contempt for them because they do not resemble a dramatic account we have read.

In prayer, we say, “You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.” [Qur’an 1:5] Worship belongs to Allah, and help is sought from Him. Both meanings are needed in learning sincerity. We want His pleasure through obedience and ask Him to make that possible. We neither become complacent about our own strength nor use the need for help as an excuse to leave what we can do.

You may know that you owe an apology while disliking the admission. Ask Allah for help, then speak truthfully. You may recognise exaggeration in your speech intended to gain praise; seek refuge in Allah from showing off and leave the exaggeration. Seeking help is not waiting until every duty feels easy. It is asking for strength while making the effort within your capacity.

Ibn Taymiyyah brings inward and outward deeds together within servanthood.⁹² We love Allah and obey Him, fear His punishment and avoid what He forbids, hope

⁹¹**The breadth of worship.**

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-‘Ubudiyyah*, in *Majmu‘ al-Fatawa*, volume 10, on the meaning and forms of worship and the reality of servanthood.

The opening defines worship and includes inward and outward deeds, their connection to love of Allah, obedience to Him, and sincerity in serving Him.

⁹²**The breadth of worship.**

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-‘Ubudiyyah*, in *Majmu‘ al-Fatawa*, volume 10, on the meaning and forms of worship and the reality of servanthood.

The opening defines worship and includes inward and outward deeds, their connection to love of Allah, obedience to Him, and sincerity in serving Him.

for His mercy and repent without despair. These meanings do not cancel one another. Sincerity does not require abandoning hope for Paradise, just as hope does not make us comfortable with neglecting obligations.

One effect of sincerity should be giving Allah's pleasure priority when human approval conflicts with it. A relative asks for something forbidden, or a colleague pressures you to testify about what you do not know. You can decline gently and preserve affection where possible without letting fear of their anger lead to disobedience. The effort appears in a clear choice, not merely in words about independence.

This does not require coldness towards people. You need their help in lawful matters, thank their kindness, receive their expertise, and want good for them. What they do not possess is a right to turn your worship into a pursuit of their praise or demand obedience against Allah's command. A believer is not someone who needs no assistance, but someone who knows to whom worship belongs and from whom success and acceptance are sought.

You may discover that fear of losing an image takes much of your attention. You hesitate to learn lest ignorance become visible, or to apologise lest regard diminish. Remember that you are not required to look perfect. Admit when you do not know and return from a recognised mistake. Preserving your faith deserves more attention than guarding an appearance that will remain imperfect however carefully you protect it.

Where you hold responsibility, sincerity cannot become a claim exempting you from accountability. Someone given charitable funds must deliver them and account for them. A teacher must learn and prepare. A public responsibility must be handled justly. Intention is between the servant and Allah; those whose trust is involved nevertheless have a right to know that their trust was fulfilled.

We need Allah after success as much as before beginning. If you perform well and people are pleased, remember those through whom you learned and received help. Thank Allah genuinely and protect the rights of those who shared the work. Recognising His favour does not remove useful confidence. It keeps confidence from becoming forgetfulness of your need or contempt for someone else.

When work struggles, review its causes calmly. You may need experience, better organisation, or time—not a verdict that your whole intention is corrupt. A good purpose does not make us knowledgeable about everything or guarantee every result we want. Learn what is missing, consult, repair, and trust Allah with what lies beyond your control.

Worship is wider than a particular feeling we wait to experience. Today you may feel deeply attentive; tomorrow you may be tired yet still pray, tell the truth, and honour a right. You act because Allah commands, hoping that attentiveness of heart will accompany correctness of action. Do not let a quieter feeling stop obedience, or imagine a state in which you no longer need forgiveness and prayer.

Our Lord, we worship You and seek Your help. We want Your pleasure, recognise our weakness, and ask You to help us do what You love. Remember these meanings in prayer and carry them into home, work, and dealings with others. Fulfil your duty, ask for help, and return when you fail. Caring for sincerity can then become part of the life you actually live rather than something beautiful to discuss from a distance.

61. Ibn al-Qayyim: Sincerity, Honesty, and Following the Sunnah

You may say that you want Allah's pleasure, then change your decision when praise disappears. Or genuinely want good but keep postponing it. Or work hard at an act of worship without learning whether it is prescribed. These are different problems. Repeating that you have good intentions will not remedy all of them. You need a sound purpose, earnest commitment, and an action guided by the Prophet's teaching.

Ibn al-Qayyim brings these meanings together: the reality of sincerity is to make the One sought your sole object; the reality of truthfulness is to make your seeking and intention wholehearted; and the two bear fruit only through full submission to following the prophetic guidance.⁹³ In plain terms, worship Allah alone, mean

⁹³Sincerity, truthfulness, and following prophetic guidance.

what you say you seek, and worship in the way He has prescribed rather than a way you invent.

This helps identify what needs repair. When we act to be spoken of, the purpose needs sincerity. When we knowingly postpone a duty without excuse, commitment needs honesty. When worship takes a form contrary to the guidance, we need knowledge and proper following. One deed may need attention in all three respects.

Consider someone helping a family in need. They learn the actual need, provide what they can from lawful means, protect the family's dignity, and do not condition help on gratitude. Sound purpose, real effort, and proper method can meet in that action. The person need not provide an elegant description of their heart. They need to act honestly and ask Allah to accept it.

Another person may begin with the same purpose, then become absorbed in having the work carry only their name. They reject useful cooperation or delay delivery until they can appear in a photograph. Something has emerged that needs correction. A good beginning does not justify everything that follows. Put the recipients' needs ahead of wanting every contribution attributed to you.

Conversely, someone may genuinely want to help but need preparation. They want to teach what they have not mastered or settle a dispute without hearing all sides. Affection alone cannot perform the task. Honest commitment includes recognising your capacity, learning, and leaving to someone better equipped what you cannot do well, instead of using a fine purpose to excuse harmful results.

Making Allah the sole object of worship does not mean abandoning every lawful desire. You may love your family, seek provision, rest after effort, and be pleased by kindness. Sincerity concerns devoting worship to Allah without granting anyone else a share in that devotion. Other permissible affairs have their own rulings and can be approached with good intentions. Do not confuse them with wanting people to see you as righteous.

Truthfulness of resolve has practical signs. Someone who means to keep a

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin*, the station of sincerity, section on making the One sought the sole object.

The passage joins care for whom a servant seeks in worship, wholeheartedness in seeking, and following the Prophet's guidance.

promise makes time for it. Someone who intends restitution searches for the person owed. Someone who wants better speech attends to what they say and pass on. They may still be unable after making the effort, but inability differs from repeated postponement while able. Be gentle with yourself without calling every instance of neglect an incapacity.

Following the Sunnah brings us back to learning. Do not add a special worship or impose a number on people without evidence. The beauty of a feeling does not establish the correctness of an action. Ask where you are unsure, learn from qualified people, and follow what is established from the Prophet. Nearness to Allah is not sought through opposing his guidance, however attractively we describe the departure.

You may need to correct a practice followed for years. Its age does not prevent returning, nor should embarrassment before those who learned it from you. Explain the correction where needed and thank whoever alerted you. Honesty does not mean defending every part of the past. It means wanting the truth now. Admitting a gap in your learning protects you from extending the error.

The self may also mistake much talk for earnest desire. We repeatedly say that we want change while changing nothing within our ability. Choose one action rather than a broad promise. Correct a report, apologise for a remark, or fulfil a trust. A clear task lets you see what has been done and what remains, and takes you beyond conversation about becoming better.

Nevertheless, tiredness or delay is not always evidence of false resolve. People differ in capacity, have excuses you do not know, and face changing circumstances. Speak about yourself with knowledge and about others fairly. When struggling, ask what cause you can address. The answer may be needed rest or missing understanding rather than more blame that keeps you from acting.

Sincerity, truthfulness, and following the guidance are not labels with which to decorate our learning. They are needed at important choices: what do I want from this, am I making the effort I can, and is the way I am doing it pleasing to Allah? Let the answers be honest and practical. Do not turn the questions into endless anxiety or an examination with which to accuse others.

May Allah give us a purpose that does not exchange worship for praise, commitment that moves us to good, and knowledge of the proper path. We correct what is deficient, thank Him for obedience, and seek His help when weak. Ibn al-Qayyim's explanation can then become something lived: we seek Allah, mean the seeking, and follow His Messenger.

62. A Sin Does Not Close Repentance

Every time you consider doing good, you may remember a fault and wonder how you can speak of sincerity when you know your own heart. Perhaps you showed off, sought admiration, or exaggerated your virtues. Recognising this should invite repentance, not convince you that honesty is no longer possible. Sin calls for return. Adding the abandonment of obedience will not repair it.

Allah says to those who have transgressed against themselves not to despair of His mercy, for He forgives all sins and is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. [Qur'an 39:53] This call invites the sinner to hope and repentance. A long record of wrongdoing need not stop a person from returning to their Lord.⁹⁴

The next verse calls us to turn to our Lord and submit to Him. [Qur'an 39:54] Hope is not permission to continue the sin. It invites us to leave what we know is wrong, regret it, resolve not to return, and address the rights connected with it. This is something we can begin instead of repeatedly telling ourselves that our past makes us hopeless.

Your repentance may concern an exaggerated impression people have of you. Correct what needs correcting rather than continue benefiting from a false image because the admission feels awkward. You may simply explain that the information is inaccurate or that an achievement was shared. A brief discomfort is more truthful than protecting praise with an error you know.

Another sin may remain between you and Allah without an outstanding right

⁹⁴ **Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2-3 and 53-54; 6:79 and 162-163; 12:23-35; 28:21-28; 3:35-37; 2:127-128 and 263-265; 76:8-10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

that requires disclosure. Repent and preserve the concealment He has granted. Announcing it is not a condition of sincere repentance. Not every return needs an audience, and not every confession benefits every listener. When uncertain about an obligation in a specific situation, ask someone who can explain without unnecessarily extending the exposure.

Some people are too ashamed of their past to return to prayer or the Qur'an. They imagine that worship will suit them only after they become better. But obedience itself helps the return. Perform the prayer you owe, seek forgiveness, read what you can, and seek good company. A perfection you have not reached should not become a condition for beginning what Allah already commands.

If you fall again after sincere repentance, repent again. The latest failure does not prove that every earlier desire to return was false. Nor should the breadth of mercy become a promise to yourself that returning can safely be postponed. You are responsible for the choice before you now. Fulfil what is required, learn what brought you back to the fault, and use what helps you leave it.

You may know that a particular kind of conversation encourages showing off, so reduce it. A circle may speak of little except appearances and competition, so seek companions who help you do good. You may habitually publish every deed without considering whether it needs publication, so slow down. Practical steps do not replace prayer; they make the request for change present in daily choices.

Repentance need not be accompanied by visible tears or feelings you can describe eloquently. Genuine regret may appear in stopping the sin, restoring a right, and asking forgiveness privately. Do not compare your return with a scene you witnessed in someone else or simulate an emotion you do not feel. Ask Allah to soften your heart and act on what you know. You need not perform for Him what He already knows.

Someone may remind you of the past, and it may hurt. The person wronged can still seek an unresolved right, but the past does not require you to remain in error. Fulfil what you owe and continue doing good. Every glance from another person is not a final judgement on your ability to repent. A changed habit is established through repeated actions, not by persuading everyone in one day.

We should treat those returning in a way that helps them. Do not dismiss apparent repentance without evidence or demand every private detail before granting your approval. Protect rights, verify where necessary, and be glad for visible good. Knowing our own need for forgiveness should make us more fit to advise gently, not turn another person's lapse into our regular topic of conversation.

Alongside repentance, remember Allah's favours. He enabled you to recognise the wrong, left you time to return, and made means of repair available. Thank Him without treating the feeling of regret as a certificate for yourself. Hope encourages action, gratitude recalls the favour, and fear protects against becoming careless with the sin.

Begin somewhere clear. Return a right you possess, stop a lie and correct its effects, or work against the praise you knowingly seek through worship. Do not demand that every aspect of your life be repaired in one instant and then give up. Repent of the wrong fully and begin fulfilling what is required as you are able, seeking help where needed.

Our Lord, do not let awareness of our faults lead us to despair. Let it bring us back to You. Forgive what has passed, help us with what remains, and grant us honesty through which we do not seek people's certification. While we can repent and act, it is not wise to spend our days either defending a wrong or staring at it without beginning its repair.

63. Sincerity Is Not Endless Doubt

Some people want to be sincere and begin questioning themselves after every act of worship. They finish a prayer and ask whether they truly wanted Allah, why they noticed someone entering, and whether pleasure in a compliment spoiled everything. The questions may continue until worship becomes a source of constant fear. That is not an understanding that helps us worship well.

Intention is your purpose, not an examination whose questions never end. If you stand to pray intending to perform what Allah has commanded, you know what you have begun. If an unwanted thought appears, resist it and continue. Do not

equate its arrival with a deliberate choice. Nor must a perfect, unchanging feeling precede every good deed. Hearts need care while the work is taking place too.

The Prophet taught that Allah has pardoned passing thoughts within his community so long as they are not acted upon or spoken.⁹⁵ This mercy towards passing inner thoughts does not absolve every intention deliberately embraced and maintained. We distinguish an idea that arrives and is disliked from a desire adopted and pursued. The distinction prevents both making light of showing off and wronging ourselves over every thought that passes.

'Uthman ibn Abi al-'As told the Prophet that Satan was interfering with his prayer and recitation and confusing him. The Prophet identified a devil called Khinzab and instructed him to seek refuge in Allah and lightly spit to his left three times. 'Uthman reported that he did so and Allah removed the disturbance.⁹⁶ He asked for useful guidance, then practised what he was taught.

A Muslim therefore need not be ashamed to seek clarification when a difficulty grows. The presence of intrusive thoughts does not prove they are wanted or that all worship is invalid. Seek Allah's protection and follow sound guidance. The instruction concerning light spitting must be observed without harming anyone nearby or soiling the place; following the Sunnah includes respecting people and the sanctity of mosques.

A wish for praise may occur while you are teaching. You dislike it and return your attention to the learner's benefit. This is an occasion for effort, not necessarily withdrawal from every useful role. If you know that you deliberately lied or performed for attention, repent of that identifiable wrong. Correcting a clear incident is different from holding a long trial over every feeling whose nature you cannot confidently determine.

⁹⁵**Unwanted passing thoughts.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oaths and Vows, chapter 15, hadith 6664.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The pardon concerns passing inner thoughts not acted upon or spoken. It does not extend indiscriminately to every forbidden intention deliberately adopted and maintained.

⁹⁶**'Uthman ibn Abi al-'As and distraction in prayer.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Greetings and Safety, hadith 2203.

The Prophet instructed him to seek refuge in Allah from Satan and lightly spit to his left three times. The prescribed response must not harm fellow worshippers or soil the place of prayer. Intrusive thoughts do not establish consent to them.

Notice when you keep asking the same question after understanding the answer, or repeat worship merely because of an unsupported possibility. Receive knowledge from those qualified to provide it and act on it. Anxiety alone is not evidence for a ruling. Religious judgements do not change each time fear intensifies or another possibility crosses the mind.

You may find it useful to remind yourself that you know the purpose with which you began, will resist what corrupts it, and can continue obeying Allah. This is an ordinary reminder of the meaning—not a prescribed devotional formula. Its purpose is to reduce unending inner debate, return attention to what you can do, and help you ask Allah for a sound heart and acceptance.

Learning sincerity should make you more honest, not more absorbed in watching people to find out whether they noticed you were not watching them. When reading the Qur'an, attend to its meaning and proper recitation. When helping someone, attend to their need. Recognising and doing the good before you is more useful than continually describing your state to yourself or others.

The strength of feeling also varies. You pray when energetic and when tired. You fulfil a duty easily on one occasion and with difficulty on another. Less emotional intensity does not necessarily mean that the original purpose has disappeared. You can be sincere while resisting fatigue and obedient without yesterday's depth of feeling. Continue striving and ask Allah for greater good.

If anxiety becomes severe enough to disrupt worship and daily life, do not remain alone with the questions. Seek help from a trustworthy scholar about the religious ruling and, when needed, a qualified professional. Asking for assistance does not contradict reliance on Allah or disgrace faith. A person may need support in responding to recurring doubt rather than more blame or accusations about intention.

Those advising should be gentle. Do not tell a person distressed by intrusive thoughts that their mere appearance proves a corrupt heart. Do not add unnecessary possibilities to the burden. Listen, guide them towards appropriate knowledge, and support them in fulfilling what they owe. They may need one clear point to act on more than a long explanation that directs their attention towards every passing

thought.

Keep self-examination useful and specific. If you exaggerated a deed, correct it. If you knowingly neglected a right in pursuit of praise, fulfil it. Do not make certain judgements about what you do not know. You seek sincerity in order to worship Allah honestly—not to spend life trying to prove that you have reached a condition in which no weakness can ever arise.

Allah knows your need and your effort. Ask Him to improve your heart, follow the guidance you have learned, and do the work as well as you can. Neither become so secure that you stop caring nor so severe that obedience becomes impossible. Between heedlessness and endless doubt is steady care: learn, act, correct a known wrong, seek your Lord's help, and continue.

64. Hidden Good and Open Responsibility

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was tending his camels when his son came and spoke about people contesting power. Sa'd recalled hearing the Prophet say that Allah loves the servant who is mindful of Him, self-sufficient, and unobtrusive.⁹⁷ The report commends devotion, freedom from blameworthy dependence and ambition, and a quiet life. Its setting was Sa'd's distance from a struggle for power—not a call to abandon every duty among people.

A servant may preserve private good: remembrance, voluntary prayer, charity, and supplication for a brother or sister. Knowing that Allah sees it, they need not tell every story to gain approval. Such work deserves care, provided its secrecy does not withhold a right or prevent a needed public service.

Sincerity does not ask us to become mysterious about our responsibilities. A fundraiser reports expenditure. Someone administering money accounts for it. Someone promising work explains what is complete and what remains. These are rights, not intrusions into the inner life. You can keep your purpose for Allah while

⁹⁷ **The mindful, self-sufficient, unobtrusive servant.**

Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Asceticism and Heart-Softening Narrations, hadith 2965.

Narrated by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas in the account of his distance from a struggle for power. Commended privacy is not an excuse to abandon a duty or conceal accounts for entrusted money.

being clear and trustworthy towards those who rely on you.

Suppose you distribute assistance and the donor asks for proof that it arrived. Do not answer that it is enough that Allah knows. He does know, and He has commanded trustworthiness. Provide appropriate evidence while protecting the beneficiary's dignity and privacy. There are many options between unnecessarily showing a recipient's face and concealing all accounts. Learn what suits the work.

Teaching or inviting people to good may be impossible without a public presence. Improve your intention, learn, and say what helps. Openness alone is not showing off. The danger is making praise the aim of worship or changing the truth to secure approval. You can speak before people while hoping for Allah's pleasure, just as you can hide a deed while waiting for it to become famous.

Fairness also requires attributing another person's contribution properly. Do not use sincerity to erase the names of those who worked or deny a worker a right. Someone may choose anonymity, but you may not impose injustice upon them in its name. Encouraging devotion to Allah does not release managers from gratitude, fairness, and repayment of what is owed.

You, too, can seek a right without turning worship into a purchase of praise. If someone claims your work, explain the truth proportionately. If payment is due, request it. What we are examining is the purpose of worship and honesty of behaviour, not every wish for fair treatment. Talk of sincerity should not become a means for the powerful to exploit another person's reluctance to ask.

Where no right requires disclosure, keeping an act private may be kinder to your heart. You need not tell friends about every voluntary worship or invite them to admire the care with which you conceal it. Perform it and attend to the rest of your life. Some people hide the details but repeatedly hint that they have secrets, waiting for a subtler form of praise.

At times, mentioning a deed is needed to ask for a ruling, teach from experience, or answer a false accusation. Consider the need, provide its proper measure, and avoid exaggeration. This neither permits all self-description without thought nor condemns it all as showing off. Truthfulness, genuine need, and a sound purpose belong together and require continued care.

When your name is not needed, consider why you insist on including it. Accountability may genuinely require identifying the responsible person. In another case, the desire may simply be to appear in every success. Recognising the difference helps the decision. Sometimes it is better to let someone else take the visible role and contribute where you can, without reducing your cooperation or goodwill.

At home, privacy is not an excuse to conceal information the family needs to organise its life. You share agreements, trust, and rights. Do not give so much voluntary charity that required family support is lost, then invoke secrecy to prevent questions about matters affecting those rights. Good is better served when each right has its place than when one chosen virtue is used to neglect all the others.

There may be days when almost everything you can do is visible: caring for a patient, completing demanding work, or raising children. Seek reward without thinking sincerity was absent because much was observed. If private remembrance or supplication also becomes possible, welcome it. Every Muslim's life need not take one outward form. What matters is obeying Allah in the circumstances one actually has.

When encouraging private worship, make the invitation gentle rather than a request to reveal it to you. Explain the virtue of hidden charity, then leave the person's deed between them and Allah. Following them with questions about everything they concealed would contradict the lesson. Helping good happen does not require you to remain present in all its details.

We hope for deeds with Allah through which we seek no one else, and for trustworthiness with people that does not hide their rights from them. We keep private what should be private, disclose what must be disclosed, and care for intention in both. The quiet person we hope to be is not someone evading responsibility, nor is the sincere person someone absent from the needs of those around them.

Part Nine: Renewing Sincerity for as Long as We Live

Understanding sincerity does not end our need for it. New work begins, circumstances change, and praise, anger, or rivalry brings fresh challenges. We may do well in one deed and struggle in another. We need knowledge of Allah that nourishes love and hope, supplication for help, and an honest review that points to a fault to correct or a good to preserve.

What we hope for is close to daily life: prayer performed sincerely, a trust protected, kindness left unspoiled by reminders, and repentance not postponed. We begin with what we know and can do, learn what is missing, and continue towards our Lord. We never outgrow His favour, and we need no certificate from people before we can work for Him.

65. Know the Lord You Worship

Much discussion of showing off can leave a person preoccupied with people: did they see me, praise me, or enter my thoughts? Learning sincerity also requires turning towards Allah and learning what increases our knowledge, love, and hope in Him. Repeating what we want to leave is not enough. We need to know whom we worship and why His pleasure takes priority over every conflicting demand.

Allah describes Himself as the One besides whom there is no god, the Knower of what is hidden and what is seen, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful.

[Qur'an 59:22] He knows what is concealed and what is apparent.⁹⁸ Neither what you actually did nor a need you struggle to explain is hidden from Him. You worship in hope of His mercy and feel ashamed to choose disobedience while knowing He sees you.

This knowledge helps when praise has made us careless. People may think you completed something unfinished or accomplished shared work alone. Their compliments please you, but Allah knows the facts as they are. Added descriptions do not alter His knowledge. Choose truth even if praise becomes smaller, correct what needs clarification, and hope that honesty will benefit you more than a flattering picture that is not true.

It also helps when people judge unfairly. You may act sincerely and be misunderstood, or fulfil a responsibility without anyone knowing its cost. You can explain your right justly and acknowledge the hurt without treating their incomplete knowledge as proof that your effort was lost. Allah knows what they do not. Ask Him to accept whatever you intended for Him.

Mercy protects against despair when a fault becomes clear. The One who knows your sin is the One who commands you to repent. The One who knows your weakness is the One you ask to strengthen you. You do not have to pretend before Him that you possess a soundness you cannot find. Ask Him to free your purpose from craving praise, help you apologise, and make you honest where desire pulls elsewhere.

Learn Allah's names as the Qur'an teaches them, and consult reliable explanation where needed. Knowing that He hears should encourage care in speech and confidence that He hears supplication. Knowing that He knows recalls that what you conceal is not hidden from Him. Reading of forgiveness invites hope and repentance. We believe in Him as He has described Himself without comparing Him to His creation.

Do not leave this as information collected. You may memorise a name and fail to

⁹⁸**Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2-3 and 53-54; 6:79 and 162-163; 12:23-35; 28:21-28; 3:35-37; 2:127-128 and 263-265; 76:8-10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

remember its meaning in a moment when you need it. When praying, remember whom you ask. When fulfilling a trust, remember that He knows its fulfilment. With a blessing, thank Him; with a mistake, seek forgiveness. Knowledge helps when it supports worship, not merely when it makes us better at discussing states we do not live.

Humility is helped by recalling the favours that preceded your effort: health, someone willing to teach, available time, or an opportunity to do good. Your effort deserves its proper recognition, but it never made Allah's favour unnecessary. Hold both truths together, and you can work confidently without forgetting gratitude or despising someone whose circumstances did not offer the same possibilities.

Seeing someone with more can distract you from appreciating what you have. Ask Allah for His bounty and pursue lawful means, but do not let comparison lead you to neglect an obligation or do something forbidden. Another person's possessions do not determine your whole worth. Wealth and reputation do not amount to a sound heart. There is known good within your reach today.

In private, you learn that worship needs no audience—not because people are enemies of your obedience, but because your Lord deserves it in every setting. Read what you can, pray, remember Allah, and ask for attentiveness. Then return to people gentle and trustworthy. Knowing Allah should increase your care for the rights He commands you to honour.

Sometimes the usual emotional response is absent. You read while exhausted or pray while worried and do not feel the ease you once felt. That alone is not a verdict on faith or sincerity. Continue the good, take appropriate rest, learn, and act. Not every obedience comes with a powerful feeling. Sometimes the effort is to obey despite a lack of energy that you can reasonably work through.

If you notice that success makes you forget Allah and difficulty alone makes you remember Him, address that. Begin with gratitude for a present blessing and preserve His commands during ease. Your Lord is not only someone to seek in a crisis. You worship Him in health and illness, abundance and hardship, asking Him for good in this world and the next.

You may pause sincerely over a single verse, understand it, and act on what it

teaches. Do not dismiss that because another person read more. Increase your recitation and learning while giving understanding its due. Someone who knows that Allah sees hidden intentions has reason to be truthful within; someone who knows His mercy has reason not to give up on repentance.

Our Lord, teach us what benefits us in our religion and help us worship You. Give us love that moves us to obedience, fear that restrains disobedience, and hope that brings us back when we fail. Knowing our Lord makes sincerity more than fear of praise. We ask how to honour His right, thank His favour, and make what we do for Him alone.

66. Ask Allah to Put Your Heart Right

The Prophet took Mu'adh ibn Jabal by the hand and told him, with an oath, that he loved him. He then advised him not to omit this supplication at the close of each prayer: "O Allah, help me to remember You, thank You, and worship You well."⁹⁹ Affection was expressed plainly and followed with something useful: a reminder that even alongside worship, the servant remains in need of Allah's help.

The prayer asks for three things we need: remembrance, gratitude, and good worship. Not simply more deeds, but deeds performed well. We ask Allah to help us do what He commands with a sound purpose. Sincerity belongs within that need. Knowing its definition does not remove the need to ask Him to grant it.

You may know that craving admiration harms your work and still find the desire present. Bring that need into your prayer. Ask, in words you understand, for help to seek His pleasure and protection from showing off. You need no unusual vocabulary and need not wait until you can express yourself as eloquently as someone else. Allah knows the need before you explain it.

Among the Prophet's supplications was: "O Allah, grant my soul its mindfulness of You, and purify it; You are the best to purify it. You are its Guardian and

⁹⁹**The supplication taught to Mu'adh.**

Abu Dawud, Sunan Abi Dawud, Witr Prayer, hadith 1522. Graded authentic by al-Albani.

Narrated by Mu'adh ibn Jabal. It asks for help in remembering Allah, thanking Him, and worshipping Him well. The instruction places it at the close of each prayer; scholars discuss its position before or after the concluding salutation.

Master.”¹⁰⁰ You ask Him for reverence and freedom from faults and sins. Saying this does not certify the self as pure. It acknowledges its need for improvement and asks Allah for what personal effort, however great, cannot make unnecessary.

Let the prayer be accompanied by fitting action. When asking for truthfulness, leave a lie you can leave. When asking for sincerity, do not deliberately manufacture praise through something you know is false. When asking to worship well, learn how to perform the worship. Supplication is not a substitute for responsibility. It is a request for help from the One who commanded and enables you.

The Prophet also prayed: “O Allah, I ask You for guidance, mindfulness of You, chastity, and sufficiency.”¹⁰¹ You ask to be guided towards what He loves, restrained from what He forbids, protected from the unlawful, and freed from blameworthy craving and dependence. These needs touch sincerity, because ignorance, greed, and weak resolve can all draw the purpose away from what is right.

Do not reserve prayer for the moment when you feel helpless. Ask before, during, and after work. A new responsibility needs trustworthiness; advice to a friend needs gentleness; charity needs a protected intention. Broad prophetic supplications help when you cannot put every need into a separate sentence. Understand their meanings and hope for the good they gather.

You may pray for days and still struggle with admiration. Do not hurry to conclude that the prayer has done nothing. You are called to pray and act, and you do not know every form of help Allah makes available. You may notice a habit, receive advice, or learn a ruling. Keep asking rather than set a deadline by which prayer must have made you perfect.

Alongside transmitted supplications, you may ask for your needs in sound words without attributing them to the Prophet or attaching an unestablished special virtue

¹⁰⁰ **Asking Allah to purify the soul.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance, and Seeking Forgiveness, hadith 2722.

Narrated by Zayd ibn Arqam. The words asking Allah to grant the soul its mindfulness of Him and purify it form part of a longer prophetic supplication.

¹⁰¹ **Asking for guidance and mindfulness of Allah.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance, and Seeking Forgiveness, hadith 2721.

Narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. The supplication asks Allah for guidance, mindfulness of Him, chastity, and sufficiency.

to them. Pray for your family's wellbeing, a truthful heart, or good for someone you hurt. Supplication is worship. Helpful expression serves its meaning rather than seeking the admiration of anyone listening.

The counsel to Mu'adh also teaches a gentle way to advise. Tell someone you care about their good, then teach a useful prayer or remind them of an act of obedience. Every reminder need not begin by accusing them of failure. Do not use a prayer as a hurtful hint that their heart is corrupt. Honest advice seeks their benefit, not your superiority.

Private prayer may protect your purpose in some circumstances. Alone, you can express a need without arranging a voice or image for anyone. You do not have to report the encounter afterwards. When there is a proper reason to pray among people, do so sincerely without producing an emotion you did not feel. Their presence does not forbid supplication; it offers another setting in which to care for the purpose.

If you are waiting for recognition, ask Allah to help you continue doing good for Him. If someone else's success troubles you, ask blessing for them and bounty for yourself. If you cannot bring yourself to apologise, ask for the courage to speak honestly. Naming a real need may help you understand what needs repair and then take the practical step it requires.

While praying, remember that mercy is not permission to disregard people's rights. Someone who asks forgiveness while knowingly retaining another person's property needs to make the return real. Restore the right, seek pardon appropriately, and stop the harm. Then hope in your Lord's mercy. Prayer is all the more truthful when accompanied by the actions available to us.

"O Allah, help me to remember You, thank You, and worship You well." Few words hold a wide meaning, taught by the Prophet to someone he expressly loved. Learn them, understand them, and act on the remembrance, gratitude, and worship they ask for. Keep your need for Allah present at the beginning and the end, in strength as much as weakness.

67. Pray for Someone Who Does Not Hear You

News arrives of an ill friend or a relative in difficulty, and you pray for them where you are. They do not hear or know what you asked, yet it is good you can offer. The Messenger of Allah said that when someone prays for a brother in his absence, the appointed angel says, “Amen, and for you the same.”¹⁰² The prayer is offered without the person being present to hear it.

This good does not require considerable wealth or the ability to travel. You can ask for health, forgiveness, guidance, a family’s wellbeing, and useful opportunities. Some forms of assistance may be beyond you while prayer remains possible. Do not undervalue what Allah has prescribed or confine kindness to what people can observe and count.

The promise gives us hope: you ask good for another, and the angel prays that you receive the like. Let your heart have room for more than its own needs. Others require Allah’s mercy as we do. Being glad for their good belongs to the brotherhood we need to learn and practise.

The person may be a lawful competitor. Their success is something you wanted, and you notice a discomfort you do not approve of. Pray for blessing in what Allah has given them and ask bounty for yourself, then refrain from harmful speech or action. You need not wait for every feeling to disappear before choosing rightly. Nor should the prayer become words contradicted by deliberate harm.

The Sunnah also tells of a man visiting a brother in another village. Allah placed an angel along his way. Asked where he was going and whether he had a favour there to maintain, the man explained that he loved his brother for Allah. The angel brought news that Allah loved him as he loved his companion for His sake.¹⁰³ A

¹⁰² **Supplication in another person’s absence.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance, and Seeking Forgiveness, hadith 2732.

Narrated by Abu al-Darda’. The angel says “Amen, and for you the same” to someone praying for a brother in his absence.

¹⁰³ **Visiting a brother out of love for Allah.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Virtue, Family Ties, and Manners, hadith 2567.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. A man visiting a brother in another village receives glad news from an angel of Allah’s love. The visitor is not named in this report.

visit not made for a particular personal advantage carried that great glad news.

Love for Allah does not make friendship cold. You enjoy a friend's company, are glad to meet them, ask about their life, and share lawful pleasures. You also hope that your affection remains within obedience and helps you both do good. Sincerity is not the absence of natural companionship. It is protecting affection from what satisfies desire while displeasing the Lord.

Busy days can make us forget people who helped us. Remember a teacher, relative, or friend who stood by you and pray for them. A kind enquiry or suitable help may accompany the prayer. There is no need for an elaborate programme that burdens either person. Leave room for loyalty in both heart and action, and do not forget kindness merely because time has passed.

Prayer does not replace a right you can fulfil. A debt should be repaid, parents' needs met as far as required and possible, and a promise honoured. Pray and fulfil the duty too. Good words become more truthful when accompanied by action. They should not become an easy escape from what requires money or effort.

You may tell someone that you prayed for them. The news may comfort them, or it may be a way of seeking praise. Consider the purpose and the person's need. Every prayer need not be announced to prove affection. Part of your care can remain between you and Allah, with no expected reply or message of thanks.

Disagreement does not require all your prayers for someone to turn hostile. You can ask Allah to guide and improve them while protecting you from their harm. This does not prevent a lawful claim or fair boundaries. Hope for someone's guidance and caution about injury can coexist. Neither requires pretending that the injury did not hurt.

Respect privacy too. Knowing about an illness or difficulty does not automatically permit publishing it in the name of asking for prayers. Seek permission or a sound justification that respects the person's rights. You can pray without telling the details. Their privacy may matter more to them than widespread sympathy they never requested. Helpful care considers what suits the recipient, not only our enthusiasm to respond.

When visiting someone ill, consider their rest rather than your wish to stay.

A few minutes, practical assistance, or leaving them to sleep may be what helps. Bring prayer and gentleness, and listen to the need. Kindness for Allah takes the recipient's circumstances seriously instead of imposing the form of giving we had chosen for ourselves.

You may never know who prayed for you privately. We do not claim that a particular event happened because of one identifiable person's supplication, but we believe in prayer's virtue and hope for its benefit. This encourages humility and gratitude: we do not know every kindness that reaches us. Let us also become people of faithful prayer even when our names are absent from its good.

Remember someone who needs your prayer now and ask Allah for what benefits them. Do not make it conditional on their doing the same for you or knowing you remembered. If you can also provide needed help, do so. Praying for someone who cannot hear is a simple place to practise sincerity: you love their good, ask it from your Lord, and leave it without a demand for praise.

68. Self-Examination That Leads to Action

Allah calls believers to be mindful of Him and to consider what they have sent ahead for tomorrow. [Qur'an 59:18] We look at what we are preparing for the Hereafter.¹⁰⁴ The purpose is practical repair: an obedience preserved, a sin left, or a right fulfilled. Recognising a mistake and repeatedly describing it without trying to change it is not enough.

Begin with a known situation rather than a sweeping judgement about yourself. You exaggerated a statement, left a useful task because someone else would receive attention, or neglected a trust. Ask what happened and what is now required. Identifying the action brings correction nearer. No one can give you a permanent certificate answering whether you have been sincere in your entire life.

You may realise that your account of a project made it sound as though all the

¹⁰⁴ **Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

credit was yours. Restore attribution and learn to speak more fairly next time. You may have helped someone, then hurt them with reminders. Restrain the reminders and apologise where appropriate. Useful self-examination brings you to an action rather than leave you holding only the name of the fault.

There is gratitude in it too. Perhaps Allah helped you tell the truth where you once struggled, hold back a hurtful sentence, or be genuinely glad for someone after an effort against envy. Thank Him and continue. Do not turn gratitude into self-admiration, but do not let fear of self-admiration prevent you from recognising His favour and being happy in obedience.

A brief reflection at the day's end, a note you write, or advice you hear may help. No particular duration or notebook is necessary for repair to count. Use what helps and leave what replaces action with preparation. Someone who records extensively while postponing an identified right needs to move from describing the problem to doing what can be done about it.

In every review, examine your own choice. Another person may have behaved badly, and you may rightly explain that. But self-examination should not become a long discussion of their faults alone. Did you respond with a lie, act unfairly, or exceed your right? Seeing what you owe does not require denying what is owed to you. It helps you pursue it without adding another injustice.

Do not attribute every difficulty to a corrupt intention. A task may fail because a skill was missing, time was insufficient, or circumstances lay outside your control. Review purpose and practical causes together. Profit and loss do not expose hidden hearts, and worldly results are not conclusive evidence of acceptance. Learn the practical lesson while asking Allah for sound intention and help.

It may be useful to consult a trustworthy person about something they can assess. Describe your wording, a dispute, or a difficult decision. Ask about accuracy, fairness, and the relevant duty—not for certainty about your heart. An adviser helps through what they know. Allow them to admit uncertainty about unseen motives or facts they do not possess.

One worthwhile result is a shorter interval between recognising a fault and correcting it. You once waited days to apologise and now try to do so sooner

when the wrong is clear. You once promised beyond your ability and now consider capacity first. Such changes bring repair closer than harsh declarations about the self followed by unchanged conduct.

You may need to reduce a recurring trigger. If comparison continually feeds envy, stop extending the conversation. If photographing everything draws you into unnecessary display, pause before publishing. If correction quickly makes you angry, let the adviser finish before responding. These are possible actions, undertaken while seeking Allah's help.

If the mistake happens again, examine the cause without despair or excuses. The intended step may have exceeded your capacity; you may have abandoned something helpful; you may need further understanding. Repentance does not wait for a complete explanation of your personality. It asks for honesty about what you already know. Return to action rather than treat another stumble as proof that improvement is impossible.

Beware of turning review into continuous doubt after every worship. You are not required to search for showing off in every happiness or ask again after the answer is clear. Attend to known mistakes, apply the ruling you learned, and continue. If repeated questioning becomes disabling, seek appropriate help instead of imposing more uncertainty on yourself.

When a useful review ends, carry its lesson into the next day. Return the identified right, leave the harmful sentence, and preserve the good made possible for you. Others may not consider the change dramatic, but it alters something real in your life. They do not have to know that you examined yourself. It is enough that the words and actions reaching them become better.

May Allah grant honesty through which we recognise our faults, hope that does not despair of His mercy, and resolve to repair what we can. Consider what you have sent ahead, then send something better. Be grateful for help, seek forgiveness for neglect, and return to obedience. Self-examination should help you live in a way pleasing to Allah, not become a substitute for that life.

69. We Seek Forgiveness and Return

You may recognise a wrong and spend days either defending yourself or condemning yourself without beginning repentance. Something simpler and more honest is needed: acknowledge it before your Lord, ask forgiveness, leave its causes as far as you can, and repair what remains of its effects. Repeated talk of regret does little while you deliberately delay a right you can fulfil or a sin you know how to stop.

Allah describes people who, after an indecency or a wrong against themselves, remember Him and ask forgiveness for their sins—who can forgive sins except Allah?—and do not knowingly persist in what they have done. [Qur'an 3:135] They remember, seek pardon, and return rather than knowingly remain settled in the sin.¹⁰⁵

The Prophet taught the foremost supplication for forgiveness: “O Allah, You are my Lord. There is no god but You. You created me and I am Your servant. I keep to Your covenant and promise as far as I am able. I seek refuge in You from the evil of what I have done. I acknowledge Your favour upon me, and I acknowledge my sin. Forgive me, for none forgives sins but You.”¹⁰⁶ Its words gather devotion, admission, and hope.

You acknowledge that He is your Lord and that you are His servant. You affirm that worship belongs to Him alone, then acknowledge your dependence, limitations, and actions. The prayer neither beautifies the sin nor ignores the blessing. You know He has favoured you, know you have fallen short, and ask His forgiveness. Recognising both truths is not contradictory. Both are real.

To acknowledge His favour and your sin is to stand honestly before Him. How much we need that honesty when defending an image becomes our habit. You can see good He enabled and a wrong that requires repentance without using the good

¹⁰⁵**Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

¹⁰⁶**The foremost supplication for forgiveness.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Supplications, chapter 2, hadith 6306.

Narrated by Shaddad ibn Aws. The report states the virtue of saying it by day or night with certainty in it. The wording joins acknowledgment of Allah's favour with acknowledgment of one's sin.

to excuse the wrong or the wrong to deny every favour.

Seeking forgiveness can interrupt self-admiration. When you overvalue your achievement and forget your faults, it recalls your need for mercy. When a lack of praise hurts, it reminds you that your greatest hope is not a word from people but your Lord's acceptance and forgiveness. This does not remove a lawful right. It helps keep applause from becoming the object of obedience.

Repentance may concern speech that harmed you and others: describing your work in a way that diminished colleagues, spreading something to lower a competitor, or exaggerating a promise. Stop, correct what must be corrected, and ask Allah to pardon you. Seeking forgiveness should not become a moment's comfort while an injury you can repair remains untouched.

Some rights require repayment, correction, or an appropriate request for pardon. Circumstances differ, and advice may be needed to avoid worsening the harm. Be honest in fulfilling what is owed rather than let uncertainty about one detail excuse leaving every duty. Do what is clear, learn what is uncertain, and seek Allah's assistance.

You may fear apologising because people are accustomed to receiving advice from you. Knowing good does not make error impossible or authorise hiding it from those affected. Be truthful to the extent needed. Acknowledging a specific mistake and committing to repair is more useful than persuading people that nothing went wrong and becoming trapped in defending what is false.

Take a practical step against repetition. Pause before forwarding a report, reduce unnecessary accounts of your achievements, or seek advice before an angry judgement. These may look small, but they require continuity. Forgiveness is sought alongside them, not instead of them. Ask Allah for improvement and change what you know repeatedly draws you towards the fault.

Do not let another fall delay a new repentance. If you returned sincerely and then weakened, return sincerely again. Beware both planning the sin on the assumption that forgiveness can be sought later and telling yourself that you are no longer fit to return. Repentance calls you to act now, not postpone again in the name of either hope or despair.

Your heart may soften as you ask forgiveness, or you may need to attend more carefully to words you are saying. Work to understand them and ask Allah for help. Do not manufacture tears or let their absence prevent prayer. Honest regret appears in leaving the sin and resolving to repair it, not only in one visible form of emotion.

Teach yourself to return after a failing to something that helps. Perform the prayer now due, restore the right, stop hurtful reminders, welcome a brother's good, and learn what you need. Do not spend the rest of the day judging only what has passed. Repentance looks at an error to lead you out of it, not keep you retelling it forever.

Our Lord, we acknowledge Your blessings and our failure to thank You as we should. Forgive us and help us obey. Make us grateful when we do well, repentant when we do wrong, and willing to receive the truth when advised. We do not want merely to speak beautifully of returning. We ask to mean it, to act nearer to Your pleasure, and to die believing in You.

70. A Little Good You Continue

A reminder about worship may make you want to change your entire life in a day. You set many tasks, fail to maintain most of them, and conclude that consistency is beyond you. Perhaps the original desire was not the problem. Perhaps you demanded a pace you could not sustain. Begin with your obligations, then add voluntary worship you can continue.

The Prophet urged people to aim rightly and come as close as they could, to know that deeds alone would not admit anyone to Paradise, and to recognise that Allah loves the deeds that continue, even when small.¹⁰⁷ We try to do what is right, hope for His mercy rather than rely proudly on our work, and preserve manageable good. This encourages sustained obedience, not neglect or enthusiasm that quickly

¹⁰⁷ **Aiming rightly and remaining consistent.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations, chapter 18, hadith 6464.

Narrated by 'A'ishah. The Prophet urges right effort and describes the most beloved deeds as those that continue, even if small. Effort does not make Allah's favour unnecessary, and maintaining small voluntary acts does not excuse abandoning an obligation.

burns out.

Obligations come first. In the sacred hadith, Allah says that nothing through which His servant draws near is more beloved to Him than what He has made obligatory.¹⁰⁸ Correcting a prayer habitually delayed without excuse takes precedence over multiplying a voluntary act you enjoy. A family right should not be lost to construct an impressive private or public religious programme.

After the obligations, consider what is available: recitation you understand and maintain, established remembrance, affordable charity, or a recurring kindness. Learn the proper manner without turning your personal schedule into a religious requirement for others. People differ in time and ability. Someone may need a different form of practice without being less sincere.

Connecting an action to a convenient time may help, provided you do not assign that time an unestablished religious virtue. You find an opportunity to read after completing a task or review an entrusted duty at a regular appointment so you do not forget. That is permissible organisation. Keep it flexible where appropriate while preserving the prescribed times and rulings of worship that has them.

Consistency still needs care for purpose. You may begin for Allah, then become anxious that people will think you have fallen away from your earlier image. Renew your intention and seek what is with Him. Receive encouragement without making continued practice conditional on admiration. Stay with good you know is useful after discussion of it quietens and it becomes an ordinary part of the day.

If you miss a voluntary act, learn what is appropriate for that act and return to good. One missed occasion need not end the practice. Some people abandon the rest of a plan because they could not complete the whole, as though benefit exists only in a perfect sequence. Do what you can properly. A prompt return is more useful than a long self-reproach that prevents what remains.

Circumstances change. Caring for someone ill, heavier work, or travel may affect the voluntary acts you can manage. Adjust sensibly and learn the relevant rulings

¹⁰⁸ **Obligatory worship before voluntary deeds.**

Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations, chapter 38, hadith 6502.

A sacred hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah. Nothing by which a servant draws near is more beloved to Allah than what He has made obligatory. Voluntary worship follows obligations in its proper prescribed manner.

and concessions when needed. A change in quantity is not always a change in sincerity. In your situation, good may lie in a required service or in maintaining the worship possible alongside fatigue.

The Prophet said, “Be keen on what benefits you, seek Allah’s help, and do not give up.”¹⁰⁹ Effort and asking for help belong together. Choose the good, take its means, and resist the avoidable laziness within your ability to resist. Then remember that success comes from Allah. Prayer does not replace effort, and effort does not replace prayer. Bringing them together is an honest way to proceed.

Continual comparison can make steadiness harder. Someone reads or gives more; learn from their diligence without forgetting your own responsibilities and means. Do not let comparison produce despair or unsustainable excess. Ask what is most useful in your circumstances and what shortcoming you can correct. Increase the good within your capacity.

A gentle companion may help you continue. They need not know every private deed or keep a record of your worship. Sharing useful company, asking for needed knowledge, and receiving advice can be enough. Good friendship supports worship; it should not become a court awarding grades to hearts or another reason to perform for attention.

Over time, consider what your learning changes in daily dealings. Are promises more truthful? Do hurtful reminders occur less often? Do you accept correction sooner? These practical questions help review without offering a conclusive verdict on the inner self. One area may improve while another still needs work. Be grateful and continue attending to what remains.

Do not expect a day on which you announce that the intention needs no further repair. Allah commands worship until certainty comes—meaning death. [Qur’an 15:99]¹¹⁰ Worship continues throughout life, together with the need for truthfulness.

¹⁰⁹ **Seeking benefit and asking Allah for help.**

Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Divine Decree, hadith 2664.

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah. The Prophet urges attention to what benefits, seeking Allah’s help, and not giving up. The narration also teaches belief in His decree regarding what has occurred.

¹¹⁰ **Explanation of the Qur’anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim; Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

ness, repentance, and help. Each new deed calls for a prayer that it be sound and accepted. Past good is not a reason to stop caring.

Choose one prescribed good you can maintain after fulfilling what is obligatory. Begin without fanfare, learn what is needed, and return if you stumble. Do not despise a small honest act or let love of a larger one make you abandon what is possible. May Allah grant us and you steadiness in obedience, sincerity renewed with it, and the good ending we hope for from His favour.

71. Sincerity and the Rest of the Heart

Trying to act for Allah reveals our need for other inward deeds. We need patience when obedience is difficult, hope when shortcomings appear, fear when carelessness attracts us, and gratitude when enabled to do well. Sincerity is not isolated from these meanings. They meet in worship, supporting an honest purpose and helping it remain steady.¹¹¹

Certainty is firm belief in what Allah has told us. Trust in His promise and reward helps us avoid making people's praise the payment for which we work. They may forget a kindness while we still hope for His reward. This need not erase the hurt of cold treatment. It should help prevent that hurt from making us abandon good merely because appreciation did not arrive.

Love of Allah moves us towards obedience and His pleasure. Sincerity is not lived only as fear of being exposed as insincere. We want our deeds accepted by the One who has favoured us. Allah says that those who love Him should follow the Prophet, and Allah will love them and forgive their sins. [Qur'an 3:31] Honest love calls for following the guidance, not departing from it in love's name.¹¹²

¹¹¹**The breadth of worship.**

Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-'Ubudiyyah*, in *Majmu' al-Fatawa*, volume 10, on the meaning and forms of worship and the reality of servanthood.

The opening defines worship and includes inward and outward deeds, their connection to love of Allah, obedience to Him, and sincerity in serving Him.

¹¹²**Explanation of the Qur'anic passages.**

Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*; *Al-Tafsir al-Muyassar*, at the passages cited in the text.

Relevant passages include 98:5; 18:110; 39:2–3 and 53–54; 6:79 and 162–163; 12:23–35; 28:21–28; 3:35–37; 2:127–128 and 263–265; 76:8–10; 24:22; and 59:18 and 22.

That love may appear in a choice no one sees. A sentence would win admiration, but it contains a lie, so you leave it unsaid. Money is within reach but not yours to take, so you decline it. You refrain not only because of possible human consequences, but because you want your Lord's pleasure. Even then, you need prayer and should not attribute success to yourself alone.

Fear of Allah prevents us from treating a corrupt purpose lightly. Remembering warnings about showing off and injustice should encourage correction of a known wrong. Useful fear does not extinguish hope or make us abandon obedience. It leads to repentance, truthfulness, and preserving rights. A fear that stops every good needs knowledge to restore balance.

Hope brings us back after sin or weakness. Knowing that repentance remains possible, we return and act. Hope is not claiming a good intention while knowingly persisting in oppression. It is expecting good from Allah while taking the path He commands. Someone lost in despair may need a reminder of mercy as much as a heedless person needs a reminder of accountability.

Reliance on Allah joins the heart's dependence on Him with taking lawful means. You teach and offer what helps, but cannot make every result exactly what you want. You advise carefully and kindly, then entrust the outcome to Him. This helps keep applause or immediate success from becoming a condition of honest work. It also keeps reliance from being used as an excuse for poor preparation.

Patience is needed in duties that are not finished once and for all: caring for parents, restraining the tongue in disagreements, and preserving a trust. There may not be thanks every time, and there may be fatigue. Seek reward and help, then do what you can. Patience is not accepting every injustice. It includes remaining faithful to what pleases Allah both in fulfilling duties and pursuing rights.

Gratitude protects the heart after success. Remember Allah's blessing, thank those who helped, and do not feel superior to someone without the same opportunity. Gratitude does not deny your effort. It places the effort alongside the gifts that preceded it and the assistance accompanying it. You can be happy with good and remain humble, teachable, and willing to be corrected.

Repentance deals with faults that occur along the way. Today's sincerity does

not prevent tomorrow's desire for applause, forgotten right, or hurtful word. Do not defend the wrong because you have done good, and do not conclude that all the good was lost. Repent of what you know, repair its effects, and continue obedience. A heart becoming better still needs forgiveness.

Contentment concerns receiving Allah's decree in what lies outside our control while preserving the legitimate means of preventing harm, seeking treatment, and claiming rights. Accepting wrongdoing is not what we call contentment, and a grieving person need not pretend to feel no pain. We hope to preserve faith, fulfil duty, and keep suffering from leading to injustice or words displeasing to Allah.

These meanings can meet in a familiar situation. Someone harms you; you refrain from aggression, hope for Allah's forgiveness, pardon where pardon is appropriate, and seek your right truthfully where necessary. Or Allah enables good; you seek Him, give thanks, guard against self-admiration, and pray for acceptance. You need not name every inward deed while living it. You need to act on its guidance.

One quality may grow while another still needs attention. Giving may be easy and forgiving hard. You may love knowledge but find correction difficult to receive. Recognise both what Allah has helped you do and what remains to be repaired. Do not rush to declare either perfection or total failure. Care for the self is renewed work, with daily opportunities for honesty, return, and further good.

We want hearts that love Allah and are devoted to Him, and lives in which that devotion becomes truthful speech, mercy, fulfilled trusts, learning, and repentance. Weakness remains, but we need not agree to live comfortably with a known wrong. May Allah improve all the deeds of our hearts, let them help one another in obedience, and make what we offer a search for His pleasure alone.

72. For Allah Alone

Your return may begin with words no one hears: My Lord, I want to be truthful with You. The honesty of that request can then appear in something close at hand: a prayer preserved, a trust fulfilled, an exaggeration left, or a kindness not made

conditional on thanks. The beginning may look small to people, but it is a choice of what you know pleases Allah.

Allah says that people were commanded to worship Him, making their devotion sincerely His. [Qur'an 98:5] We worship and we seek sincerity. A claim to a sound heart does not replace duties, and many deeds do not replace a sound purpose. We want correct work through which the heart seeks its Lord, asking Him to help with what is missing and accept what He has enabled.

You return to ordinary life: home, work, people, ease, and fatigue. Every circumstance need not change before you begin. You can be truthful in a promise, fair towards someone who differs, gentle with someone who needs you, and faithful in work without exaggerating its description. There is ample room for sincerity in details so familiar that no one pauses to notice them.

When helping, remember the person's need before the wish to have your kindness known. Give what benefits, protect dignity, and do not hold the gift over them. They may thank you and you may be glad, or forget and leave you with an effort to make against resentment. Do not turn kindness into a debt of praise collected whenever you meet. If you sought Allah's pleasure, hope for the reward with Him and fulfil the manners you owe.

When working together, be glad for the good achieved even when the credit is not yours alone. Attribute work fairly, learn from skill, and reconsider a decision when another proves more useful. Do not make your name larger than the purpose for which you joined. You can protect a legitimate right while loving other people's success and not requiring every good to begin with you.

When praised, appreciate the kind thought and remember the shortcomings you know. You need neither deny every good quality nor believe every description. Take praise as encouragement rather than an aim, and advice as help rather than humiliation. After success, your greatest need is honesty in the work to come, not a life spent replaying earlier approval.

When effort is overlooked, remember that Allah's knowledge has not overlooked it. Seek a right truthfully where needed, but do not let resentment at missing appreciation lead to lying or injustice. You can feel hurt and still choose fairness,

want to withdraw and still continue a useful duty. That is effort through which we hope for Allah's pleasure, not a claim that nothing affects us.

When a sin becomes known to you, do not delay returning. Repent, repair what you can of its effects, and use the means that help you leave it. Do not defend it because admission changes your image, or despair because you have weakened before. The rest of your life still offers time to send good ahead. Do not turn all of it into a story about yesterday's failure.

Preserve some worship in honest privacy with your Lord: supplication, remembrance, recitation, prescribed prayer, or charity whose donor need not be named. Do not make it a story waiting to be discovered, and do not neglect a duty for it. Do what helps, seek acceptance, and then turn to family and neighbours with a heart that wants their good.

People also have a right not to have their hearts judged without knowledge. Learning the name of showing off should not make us accuse everyone whose good becomes visible. Love for a person should not become a certificate that admits no error. Advise about what you know, judge fairly, and leave what is hidden to its Lord. The heart most directly entrusted to your care is your own, and the deeds most directly awaiting your correction are those required of you.

You may hope for a better society. Begin also with those affected by your own conduct. Teach a child gently, thank a worker, preserve a partner's right, and speak honestly with a friend. Do not preach sincerity and then expect people to serve your image. The meaning becomes real when care for the heart meets fairness and mercy in daily dealings.

When the path feels difficult, ask Allah for help rather than claim permanent strength. Learn from people whose knowledge and faith are trustworthy, seek compassionate advice, and begin with what you can do. The measure is not the number of deeds you imagine doing someday, but the honesty of what you begin and maintain. A missed obedience need not close every remaining opportunity for good.

For Allah alone, we hope, are our prayer, charity, learning, advice, and everything through which we seek to draw near to Him. We love Him, hope for His mercy,

and fear spoiling our deeds through what He forbids. We claim no complete purity. We ask for improvement we never stop needing, acceptance we cannot do without, and forgiveness for what we have neglected.

Our Lord, put our hearts and deeds right. Forgive what we concealed and what we made public. Help us tell the truth when it is costly, act fairly when desire resists, and show mercy when anger is strong. Let the rest of our lives be spent in obedience to You. Grant sincerity and acceptance, and keep us firm in faith until we meet You. For You we work, from You we seek help, and to You we return—for Allah alone.

A Thirty-Day Practice for Training the Heart

This thirty-day practice is not a measure of whether a deed is accepted, nor a verdict on what lies in anyone's heart. It is a way to notice our aims, correct what we can, and join worship to fairness, mercy, and trustworthiness. We need both a sound intention and an action Allah permits, while safeguarding people's rights. This plan does not ask you to inspect your intention repeatedly, abandon good deeds for fear of showing off, or judge other people.

Set aside a short time each day: read the page, take one step, and write a brief response. You do not need to perform every exercise perfectly. If you miss a day, resume with the next one; do not punish yourself. These are educational exercises written for Madarej, not transmitted religious texts, legal rulings, or treatment advice. Ask qualified people about individual religious, medical, or legal questions.

Daily record: What was the situation? What did I choose? Which right did I protect? What is one next step? Assess actions you can observe; do not award yourself a score for the purity of your heart.

Day 01 — Notice Your Intention Before Judging It

Aim. Begin with calm attention, not self-accusation or a claim that your heart is already pure.

Practice. Before an ordinary task or act of help, write one line: What do I hope for through this? Name the nearest motive honestly, even if service, hope for reward, and appreciation are mixed.

Review. Afterwards, note what changed in your intention and what you did when you noticed it. Do not decide that the deed was accepted or rejected. Write one thing to improve tomorrow.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 02 — Separate a Feeling from a Choice

Aim. Enjoying praise is a human feeling; making praise the purpose of a deed is a choice that may need correction.

Practice. Recall a recent time you were pleased by praise or hurt when your effort went unmentioned. Name the feeling without exaggeration, then identify what you chose next: Did you keep helping, overstate your contribution, or withhold something beneficial?

Review. Do one good thing today without waiting for a response. If someone mentions your work, answer graciously without fishing for more praise. If no one mentions it, protect your legitimate rights without making the recipient pay for another person's coldness.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 03 — Choose a Beneficial Deed Done Quietly

Aim. A private good deed can loosen attachment to people's attention; it is not a way to judge anyone else's intention.

Practice. Meet a small need without announcing it: help your family, make a sincere supplication, or assist someone while protecting their dignity. Do not neglect an obligation in order to create a secret deed, or conceal something that needs documentation or coordination.

Review. At day's end, note what made the act beneficial and what tempted you to publicise it. If sharing the experience could teach something, consider whether you can share the lesson without making yourself the centre of the story.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 04 — Put Obligations and Rights First

Aim. Sincerity practice must not become an excuse to neglect an obligation, delay someone's right, or prefer an optional deed over a responsibility.

Practice. Review your schedule. Identify an obligation to Allah and a person's right that could be crowded out by a project you enjoy. Arrange your time so the essentials come first, then add what you can. If plans conflict, communicate early and do not promise beyond your ability.

Review. Note where you prioritised well and where a wish to appear especially devout or generous displaced a nearby right. Repair the matter with a clear time or an honest apology—not a long self-reproach that returns nothing owed.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 05 — Prepare for Work That Others Will See

Aim. Public work may be needed. Protect its purpose and perform it faithfully; sincerity does not require fleeing every visible task.

Practice. Complete a necessary visible task. Beforehand, name why it is needed and who benefits. Afterwards, review whether you embellished your image or used publication mainly to promote yourself. If documentation is needed, record only what proves the work and protects rights.

Review. Write one sentence distinguishing a justified reason to show the work from a wish for status. If the distinction is unclear, ask a trustworthy person about the effect and context; do not accuse yourself or others without evidence.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 06 — Receive Praise without Becoming Impressed with Yourself

Aim. Take a kind word graciously without making it your goal, denying Allah's favour, or claiming perfection.

Practice. If someone praises you today, answer briefly and politely. Remember Allah's enabling grace and name one thing you still need to learn or improve. Do not insult yourself in response, and do not recite a list of achievements to prove you deserve the compliment.

Review. Note the effect of praise: Did it encourage you, pull you into comparison, or make you repeat your own story? Take what is useful, leave the exaggeration, and return to the next task without replaying the moment for pleasure.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 07 — Review the First Week

Aim. This review describes what happened; it does not judge your unseen state. If one day was difficult, do not erase the rest or deny yourself further good.

Practice. Read your notes from Days 1–6. Choose one moment when you separated a legitimate request for fairness from a desire for praise, and one moment when you reacted quickly. What came before it—fatigue, comparison, fear of being forgotten, or an expected reward?

Review. Choose one small safeguard for next week, such as closing an app after sharing a service update or completing a connected right before discussing your contribution. Measure the plan by clarity and your ability to return, not by the absence of feelings.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 08 — Help without Reminding People of Your Favour

Aim. Kindness does not give us permission to humiliate the person we help. Protecting their dignity is part of good service.

Practice. Assist someone with a known need and ask what would help rather than imposing the type of aid that earns public admiration. Protect their privacy; do not photograph their face or story without permission. If supporters need an update, seek consent and describe the need rather than displaying someone's vulnerability.

Review. Did your help meet the person's need? Did you want to bring it up later? Set a practical boundary against reminding them of it. Seek advice if the financial or formal arrangement needs careful handling.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 09 — Give without Exposing What Should Remain Private

Aim. Privacy is not an absolute rule: disclosure may be needed to protect a right or ensure transparency. Learn to disclose only what is necessary.

Practice. Choose a gift or service you can offer discreetly while keeping proper records and shared rights. Do not conceal money that is not yours or withhold a document a partner or organisation needs. Let the recipient seek help again without public embarrassment.

Review. Ask: What needed to be known? Who needed to know it? What did not need to be shared? If harm or confusion remains possible, consult the person qualified to advise before acting.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 10 — Be Sincere in Home and Nearby Work

Aim. Intention is tested in work that is rarely displayed: keeping an appointment, finishing a household task, or honouring a small promise.

Practice. Choose a care task at home or an unobtrusive professional commitment. Begin on time and complete it to the agreed standard. Do not wait for someone to notice. If duties are unclear, discuss them instead of turning silence into a favour to be remembered later.

Review. Note the effect of completing the task on others, then ask whether you wanted them to notice. If the division of responsibility is unfair or unclear, ask for a fair conversation; sincerity is not accepting exploitation.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 11 — Do Good without Applause

Aim. Lack of recognition may hurt, but it does not automatically make the work worthless or oblige you to continue under unfair conditions.

Practice. Complete one beneficial task whose value does not depend on an audience. Keep a note of any practical outcome needed for a shared project, but do not turn documentation into self-promotion.

Review. Notice the wish to be seen without obeying it automatically. If credit or payment is a genuine right, address it clearly and fairly. Do not demand loyalty or praise as an unstated price for kindness.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 12 — Accept Advice and Make a Correction

Aim. Advice can sting and still be useful; accepting what is true is not the same as surrendering every right.

Practice. If someone offers feedback, listen before replying. Ask for a specific example if needed. Verify what can be verified; acknowledge the accurate part and explain calmly what remains unclear. If you find an error, correct it where it caused harm.

Review. Write down what you changed, or what you still need to check. Avoid mockery, retaliation, and public shaming. If the matter requires expertise, pause judgment and consult someone qualified.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 13 — Share Credit Fairly

Aim. The heart is tested when a useful result bears someone else's name. Protect fairness through clear facts, not accusations about motives.

Practice. In a shared task, identify who did what. Thank contributors accurately. If your own work is omitted, request a correction politely and keep relevant records. Do not let modesty become consent to misattribution.

Review. Note one decision that treated the team fairly and protected your rights. Do not retaliate by withholding a shared benefit. Accurate credit and sincere intention can support one another.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 14 — Tell the Truth When It Is Difficult

Aim. Truthfulness may cost comfort or approval; it must still be joined to fairness and good judgment.

Practice. Identify a situation where you are tempted to shade the truth to protect your image, avoid a small consequence, or please someone. State the facts without exaggeration, and choose a respectful way to communicate them. Do not reveal another person's private information unnecessarily.

Review. If your earlier words misled someone, correct them directly and repair the practical effect. If the situation involves a serious legal or personal risk, seek qualified advice rather than improvising a ruling.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 15 — Admit a Shortcoming and Repair Its Effects

Aim. Honest regret begins repair; repeating apologies without changing the harm is not enough.

Practice. Name one specific shortcoming without turning it into a general attack on yourself. If someone's right was affected, identify what can be returned, corrected, or stopped. Apologise without shifting blame, and state what you will do differently.

Review. Choose one safeguard that reduces the chance of recurrence: a reminder, a clearer agreement, asking before sharing, or changing a habit. If repair requires another person's participation, ask rather than assuming what they need.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 16 — Resist Comparison

Aim. Another person's visible worship or generosity is not a measure of your worth or a window into their heart.

Practice. Notice an account or gathering that draws you into competing displays of devotion or giving. Step away from it for a day and choose a good deed that fits your own obligations. Do not judge the account's owner. You are addressing an effect on yourself.

Review. Write what you genuinely need and what was simply a wish to appear equally impressive. Set a limit on digital consumption and replace it with quiet action or reliable learning. Review the effect after a week.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 17 — Ask Allah for Help, Then Take the Means

Aim. Intention is not a claim that accomplishes everything by itself. We ask Allah for help and take the means to do what is right.

Practice. Before a familiar act of worship or beneficial task, pause for a supplication suited to your need, then identify the first practical step. Do not use supplication as a substitute for learning or planning. Ask qualified people about religious questions; learn the skill you lack.

Review. Note what helped: a suitable time, a reliable companion, a plan, or removing a distraction. Thank Allah for making the task easier, and acknowledge other people's effort rather than claiming the outcome entirely for yourself.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 18 — Treat Those You Help with Gentleness

Aim. A desire to help can become impatience or control. Review how you treat people as well as whether the task is beneficial.

Practice. In a service situation, let the other person explain their need. Ask before arranging their affairs or sharing their information. Use less commanding language; do not turn their difficulty into a public lesson. If you cannot help, say so honestly or point them to a reliable route you know.

Review. Did the person retain agency and dignity? What could you have said more gently? Repair any hurt you caused today, if possible, and learn a boundary that keeps assistance safe.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 19 — Be Trustworthy in the Details

Aim. The pursuit of reputation can quietly damage accuracy: a number, quotation, attribution, or date.

Practice. Choose something you will share or submit. Check the source, date, and claim before publication. Distinguish the words you quote from your explanation. Do not attribute a statement from memory when verification is available.

Review. Record what you verified and what remains uncertain. Correct an error where it reached people; do not hide it to preserve an image. If correction requires expertise, withhold judgment until you can check it.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 20 — Protect Your Work from Being Misappropriated

Aim. Cooperation tests sincerity when our name is not prominent. Clear agreements protect rights better than suspicion about people's hearts.

Practice. In a shared task, agree on responsibilities, ownership, and how the result will be published. Credit contributors accurately. If you need your own contribution documented, ask courteously. If a dispute arises, gather relevant facts and seek a fair decision-maker.

Review. Record one choice that treated the team fairly and protected your right. Do not accept the theft of your work in the name of humility, and do not punish beneficiaries by withholding a shared result. Fair attribution is part of sound conduct.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 21 — Stay Steady When a Plan Falters

Aim. Sincerity is tested when results are slow, yet perseverance must account for capacity and circumstances.

Practice. Choose a beneficial habit or service that did not produce the result you expected. Write the actual outcome and consider whether the method, timing, or expectation needs adjustment. Ask one beneficiary what helped instead of treating their entire reaction as your measure. Change one small step and set a fair trial period.

Review. If illness or responsibility prevents continuation, arrange a realistic alternative; do not call every limitation insincerity. If the task is unsuitable, stop clearly, keep what you learned, and move to something more beneficial without theatrical declarations.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 22 — Review What You Share about Good Deeds

Aim. A public update can gather support or encourage good; it can also expose people's dignity or seek admiration. Weigh the need before posting.

Practice. Before sharing anything today, ask: Who needs this information? Do I have permission to use names or images? Can the benefit be shared without exposing the recipient? Are amounts and outcomes stated accurately? If posting is unnecessary, delay it a day and notice your motive.

Review. Record your decision and why you made it. If you post, consider whether it served the work or mainly your image. Motives may be mixed; correct your course without judging others from one scene.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 23 — Hear Criticism without Retaliation

Aim. When work is tied to our identity, criticism can feel like an attack. Practice checking the claim and responding fairly.

Practice. Do not reply at the height of anger. Write the objection as you understood it; ask for an example if it is vague. Check what can be checked. Acknowledge what is sound, explain what is not, and avoid ridicule or exposing the critic.

Review. Note your feelings before and after responding. If a public answer is needed, limit it to correcting a claim or protecting a right—not revenge. If you were wrong, correct it with the same clarity with which you presented your work.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 24 — Repent without Abandoning the Doors of Good

Aim. Fear of showing off should not imprison a person from worship or repair. Address the motive and continue with permissible good.

Practice. Name one beneficial action you stopped from fear of being seen. Distinguish a meaningful sign from mere scruple or hesitation. Resume the action in a sound way, and consult someone qualified if intrusive doubt keeps recurring. Do not repeat worship compulsively just to feel certain.

Review. Write one good action you will return to and one boundary against repeated checking. Review your conduct reasonably, then continue. This exercise is not a general ruling on specific acts; consult qualified scholars or clinicians where needed.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 25 — Rest without Turning Exhaustion into a Display

Aim. The body and our families have rights. Rest that helps us fulfil responsibilities is not a failure of sincerity or a badge of virtue.

Practice. Arrange lawful rest that meets your needs: sleep, a walk, or time with family. Do not answer fatigue by scolding yourself or presenting busyness as proof of merit. If the load is too great, discuss a fairer distribution and ask for support.

Review. Note the effect of rest on your patience and attention. What activity should be reduced? Which right needs your presence? Balance is measured by fulfilling rights and sustaining a realistic effort, not by hours worked.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 26 — Choose a Sustainable Continuation

Aim. A small steady practice can train us better than an impressive plan abandoned after a few days. Do not demand more than you can carry.

Practice. Review habits that have begun to settle. Choose one small act with a clear time and place, linked to something already in your day, such as after prayer or at the start of work. Prepare what will help, and tell only those who need to know.

Review. Write the minimum version you can keep on a busy day and the fuller version when circumstances allow. Protect the habit from constant expansion; let it settle before adding another.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 27 — Plan How to Return after a Setback

Aim. A partial setback does not erase what you learned. A sound plan is shown by returning and correcting the cause, not by claiming never to fall.

Practice. Name a likely obstacle: forgetting, travel, pressure, or disagreement. For each, choose a return step you can take within a day and someone you can consult if needed. Do not design a punishing penalty; make a realistic alternative that protects obligations and restores the practice.

Review. Put the plan where you can find it. If the same setback repeats, adjust the environment or timing instead of repeating blame. If it involves harmful or compulsive behaviour, seek suitable help rather than hiding it behind admonition.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 28 — Join Intention, Action, and Rights

Aim. Test whether you can connect a sound purpose to a sound deed and a protected right without crowding your day with goals.

Practice. Plan only three actions: an obligation to fulfil, a person's right to protect, and one additional good deed within your capacity. Write why you will do each and how. Begin with obligations; do not add a fourth goal just because the plan looks modest.

Review. In the evening, assess the quality of each action, not its appearance. If duties conflicted, record your order and reason, then repair what is needed. Ask an affected person whether their right was protected.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 29 — Review the Month Fairly

Aim. Honest assessment includes both progress and shortcomings; it does not claim to know whether Allah accepted a deed.

Practice. Compare your Day 1 notes with your recent ones. Choose one situation where your response became calmer or fairer, and one where praise or withdrawal still draws you in. Ask someone who has experienced the change for specific feedback, remembering that they see outward actions, not hidden intentions.

Review. Write three things learned, one action to continue, one right needing repair, and one question for a qualified person. Do not use a score to praise or condemn yourself; use it only to plan.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Day 30 — Establish a Weekly Follow-Up

Aim. The schedule ends; striving does not. Turn what helped into a practice you can return to, without excessive self-inspection.

Practice. Choose a short weekly time to review intention, action, and rights. Use only three questions: What good will I continue? What effect do I need to repair? Whom should I thank or apologise to? Put the time in your calendar.

Review. Continue for a month before revisiting the plan. Adapt it when circumstances change while keeping obligations; every adjustment is not a failure. Ask Allah for help, learn, and proceed. Acceptance belongs to Him; our duty is honest effort.

Journal. Situation: _____

What I chose: _____

Which right I protected: _____

One next step: _____

Weekly Reviews and a Simple Scale

On Days 7, 14, 21, and 28, reread your notes and choose one example from each area: an action completed, a beneficial effect, and something to repair. Do not turn numbers into a certificate of piety. Review observable conduct: Did you keep a promise, protect someone's privacy, credit work accurately, or apologise and restore a right?

For each item, use 0–2: **0** — I did not do this, or acted against it; **1** — I took a partial step or needed a reminder; **2** — I completed an appropriate action. Review: fulfilling obligations before voluntary deeds; protecting people's rights; accurate attribution and records; accepting correction; returning after setbacks. The total is not a verdict on sincerity; it helps you choose the next practice.

If the total is low, do not expand the schedule or increase punishment. Choose one item and name a practical aid: a time, fewer distractions, agreement with a

partner, or qualified advice. If it rises, thank Allah and acknowledge those who helped; keep the review that was useful.

Closing Check-In

Answer these questions on Day 1 and again on Day 30 as personal observations, not a test of pure intentions: Can I name my motive before a familiar task? Can I distinguish a legitimate need to assert a right from attachment to praise? Do I fulfil obligations before adding voluntary deeds? Do I verify a source before passing on a quotation? Do I correct an error when I discover it? Do I continue permissible good while resisting obsessive fear of showing off?

For each question choose **rarely** / **sometimes** / **often**, and note one real situation. A high number is not self-praise; ask someone affected by your actions for feedback. This exercise cannot see the heart or prove acceptance. Choose one habit to keep for four weeks, one repair step, and a weekly review of no more than ten minutes.

If you stumble, stop the self-blame, name what happened honestly, restore any right, repent to Allah, and return to a manageable good deed. If intrusive thoughts become compulsive or distressing, seek appropriate qualified support. This practical guide is not a diagnosis or therapeutic ruling.

Qur'an Index

- 1:5** — Chapter 60
- 2:127** — Chapter 15
- 2:128** — Chapter 15
- 2:263** — Chapter 16
- 2:264** — Chapter 16, Chapter 20
- 2:264–265** — Chapter 16
- 3:31** — Chapter 71
- 3:35** — Chapter 12
- 3:37** — Chapter 12
- 3:92** — Chapter 31
- 3:135** — Chapter 69
- 4:58** — Chapter 43
- 4:135** — Chapter 39
- 5:8** — Chapter 52
- 6:79** — Chapter 10
- 6:162** — Introduction
- 10:22–23** — Chapter 10
- 12:23** — Chapter 9
- 12:24** — Chapter 9
- 12:33** — Chapter 9
- 12:35** — Chapter 9
- 12:108** — Chapter 45
- 15:99** — Chapter 70

- 18:110** — Chapter 5
- 19:42** — Chapter 10
- 19:47** — Chapter 10
- 21:90** — Chapter 7
- 24:22** — Chapter 49
- 26:109** — Chapter 14
- 28:21–23** — Chapter 11
- 28:23** — Chapter 11
- 28:24** — Chapter 11
- 28:25** — Chapter 11
- 39:2** — Chapter 3
- 39:3** — Chapter 3
- 39:53** — Chapter 62
- 39:54** — Chapter 62
- 49:6** — Chapter 46
- 53:32** — Chapter 36
- 59:9** — Chapter 30
- 59:18** — Chapter 68
- 59:22** — Chapter 65
- 76:8** — Chapter 13
- 76:9** — Chapter 7, Chapter 13
- 76:10** — Chapter 7
- 98:5** — Chapter 3, Chapter 72

People and Themes

- Abu Bakr** — Chapters 32, 49
- Abu Dharr and responsibility** — Chapters 55
- Abu Talhah's garden** — Chapters 31
- Acceptance, asking Allah for** — Chapters 15, 57, 72
- Advice and correction** — Chapters 14, 39, 45
- Bilal** — Chapters 57
- Charity and the dignity of recipients** — Chapters 13, 16, 28, 29, 44
- Children and family life** — Chapters 12, 21, 30, 41, 42
- Cooperation and shared credit** — Chapters 17, 32, 44, 45
- Despair and returning to Allah** — Chapters 62, 69
- Duties before voluntary worship** — Chapters 6, 8, 41, 70
- Envy, rivalry, and another person's success** — Chapters 23, 40, 54, 67
- Fairness towards opponents** — Chapters 10, 39, 49, 52, 54
- Following the Sunnah** — Chapters 5, 59, 61
- Forgiveness and restoring rights** — Chapters 47, 49, 50, 62, 69
- Gifts, wages, and lawful benefits** — Chapters 11, 24, 43, 51, 53
- Gratitude and self-admiration** — Chapters 20, 36, 65, 71
- Hidden worship and public responsibility** — Chapters 3, 28, 32, 37, 64
- Hope for Paradise and fear of the Fire** — Chapters 7, 23, 71
- Ibn al-Qayyim** — Chapters 4, 61
- Ibn Rajab** — Chapters 19, 37, 59
- Ibn Taymiyyah** — Chapters 6, 60
- Ibrahim and Isma'il** — Chapters 10, 15

- Intention: meaning and renewal** — Chapters 1, 2, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24
- Ka'b ibn Malik** — Chapters 50
- Knowing Allah and seeking His help** — Chapters 60, 65, 66
- Leadership and leaving a position** — Chapters 44, 51, 55
- Learning and teaching** — Chapters 14, 45, 59, 60, 61
- Mercy towards vulnerable creatures** — Chapters 48
- Musa at the water** — Chapters 11
- Parents and care** — Chapters 25, 58
- Praise: sought and unsolicited** — Chapters 33, 34, 35, 38
- Repentance after insincerity** — Chapters 26, 50, 62, 69
- Scruples, intrusive thoughts, and excessive doubt** — Chapters 19, 37, 63, 68
- Self-examination** — Chapters 1, 18, 59, 68
- Showing off and seeking a reputation** — Chapters 33, 34, 35, 36
- Social media and publishing** — Chapters 20, 35, 46
- Steadiness in worship** — Chapters 57, 70
- Supplication and prayer for others** — Chapters 66, 67, 69
- The men in the cave** — Chapters 25, 26, 27
- Trusts, wages, and honest work** — Chapters 27, 43, 44, 47, 53, 55
- 'Umar and a lasting gift** — Chapters 51
- Uways al-Qarani** — Chapters 58
- Weakness, genuine excuses, and sincere wishes** — Chapters 22, 23, 62
- Yusuf** — Chapters 9
- Zaynab bint Jahsh** — Chapters 54