

AHLAN

A NEW YOU

From the book “Renew Your Life”
by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazali

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AHLAN is a joint venture project between CIMS (Conveying Islamic Message Society) and Tarh El-Kheir Society committed to present true Islam.

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Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazali Al-Saqqa (1917–1996) was a renowned Muslim scholar and one of the most influential advocates of Islam in the twentieth century. His writings have inspired and influenced generations of Muslims across the world.

Al-Ghazali was born in 1917 in the small town of Al-Buhayrah, southeast of the coastal port of Alexandria. He studied Islam at the most distinguished Islamic university in the world, Al-Azhar, and graduated in 1941.

The author of 75 books, Sheikh Al-Ghazali attracted a broad following with works that sought to interpret Islam and its Holy Book, the Qur'an, in a modern light. He is widely credited with contributing to a revival of Islamic faith in Egypt over the last few decades and is recognized as one of the most revered sheikhs in the Muslim world.

He was unshakable in his belief that Muslims cannot succeed in this modern age unless they go back to their faith and implement it in their lives; that they cannot hope to be successful if they reduce Islam to mere worship rites and banish it from their day-to-day lives.

A consistent line in Sheikh Al-Ghazali's career was his unwavering stand in support of what he believed to be right. He considered social justice to be one of the principal aims of Islam. He, therefore, wrote extensively about every aspect of social injustice, advocating a return to the Islamic values which would be certain to ensure justice for all.

Contents

1-Renew Your Life	7
2-The True Rebirth	13
3-Live Within the Limits of Your Day.....	17
4-Your Life Is the Product of Your Thoughts	22
5-Nothing Will Happen Unless Decreed by Allah	26
6-Your Time is Your Asset	31
7-Bring Yourself to Account	35
8-Turn Your Lemons Into Lemonade	38
9-Would You Take a Million for What You Have?	43
10-Come to Prayer! Come to Success!	47
11-Raising Yourself from Humanity to Spirituality	57

1-Renew Your Life

Often, when we want to start a new page in our life, we tie such a wish to some favorable circumstances in the unknown future, a turnabout in our career, or a special date or event.

This postponement is accompanied by the belief that power will come to us at that time to invigorate us after a period of indolence and reawaken hope after despair. But this is merely an illusion; renewal of life springs, above all, from within the self.

When life is faced with purpose and insight, there is little danger of succumbing to one's surrounding circumstances, no matter how bitter they may be. Rather than being swept along by their currents, one would benefit from them, retaining one's real self in the face of them, just as flower seeds buried under heaps of earth cleave their way up to the light where they release their refreshing fragrance. They transform the soil and muddy water into joyful colors and pleasant scents; we can do the same if we take control of our time and preserve our freedom of action while confronting adverse conditions.

We are able to fulfill much without waiting for external help.

By harnessing hidden internal powers, buried faculties, and limited or trifling opportunities, man can build himself anew.

There is no time to linger. Help is given to those who are walking their way towards the truth, but the power of running or climbing will not be showered on those who are crippled with inaction. That is impossible.

Do not hinge the building of your life on some chance that may or may not break forth from the unknown. This will not bring you anything good.

The present days you have in your hands, the soul within you, and the smiling or frowning circumstances around you are the foundations from which your future emerges. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ¹ said, *“Allah² spreads out His Hand at night to accept the repentance of those who sinned during the day, and He spreads out His Hand by day to accept the repentance of those who sinned during the night.”*³

¹ May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

² The Name is indicative and all-inclusive of every Divine Name and Attribute of Absolute Perfection: the One God, the Maker, the Almighty, the All-Merciful, etc.; in Arabic it means ‘the One exclusively worthy of deification and worship’. It is important to note that ‘Allah’ is the same word that Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews use for God.

³ Related by Muslim.

Every postponement of a life-renewing plan through which you get yourself on the right track only prolongs the dark period you want to deliver yourself from, and keeps you defeated and powerless in front of temptations and disappointments. It can even drag you down a steeper slope, and here lies the calamity.

“The day and night are two mounts. Ride them well to the Hereafter. Beware of procrastination (of repentance), for death comes suddenly. Do not be deluded by the Forbearance of Allah; Paradise and Hellfire are closer to you than your shoelace.”⁴ Then Prophet Muhammad ﷺ recited: ﴿Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.﴾⁵

It is important to rearrange your life from time to time, to look critically into its different corners to dig out the defects and failures, and create a short- and long-term scheme to eliminate them. Every few days, you look into the chaos of your desk drawer and tidy up the scattered scraps, messy books, and useless papers. You put everything in its proper place and throw the meaningless things into the trash. The rooms of your house become messy by the end of the day, and so busy hands go up and down, here and there, to clean the dirty furniture, dump any waste into the bin, and restore everything to order and beauty.

⁴ Related by Ibn ‘Ady in Al-Kamil.

⁵ Translated meanings of Az-Zalzalah 99: 7-8.

Does our life not deserve such an effort? Does it not deserve to have its affairs examined from time to time to see if there are any problems that need solving, or any sins weighing it down that need purifying? It deserves to have its profits and losses considered after every stage forged through this life journey, and to be restored to equilibrium and stability whenever it is shaken by crises or conflicts.

More than any other creature, humans need to delve deeply within and explore themselves in order to protect their private and public lives from disease and disunion. Their moral and mental structure rarely remains intact and concrete with sharp collisions against desires and temptations. If left to destructive forces, morality and sensibility will inevitably be ruined, like the spilled beads of a necklace whose string has broken. *«...one whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance, one who follows his own lusts and whose affair (deeds) has become broken up.»*⁶ Hence, continuous work is necessary to organize and accurately monitor oneself.

Before every new morning, Allah exhorts mankind to renew their lives with the break of dawn, having rested their bodies after a day's labor and upon rising from their beds to face a new day. At that decisive time they can think over their stumbles, falls, and sins; at that peaceful time every one of us can renew our life and rebuild ourself anew with the shining rays of light, hope, and new

⁶ Translated meanings of Al-Kahf 18: 28.

beginnings, guided by the Voice of Truth calling out everywhere to restore the wandering and revive the weary.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Our Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He) descends every night to the nearest heaven (to our world), when only the last third of the night remains, and says, *‘Is there any seeker of My Favor that I may give to him? Is there any supplicant that I may answer him? Is there any asker of forgiveness that I may forgive him?’* This continues until the break of dawn.”⁷

And, *“The nearest a slave can be to his Lord is during the middle of the night.”*⁸

If you can be among those who remember Allah during that special time of closeness to Him, be among them. It is the time when night goes and morning comes, and out of the debris of the near or distant past you can rise to build your future.

Do not be discouraged by your countless sins. Even if they are as much as the ocean foam, Allah will not mind forgiving them all for you as long as you turn to Him repentantly and hurry your steps for His Mercy and Pardon. Past ingratitude should be no barrier to sincere repentance. *﴿Say, “O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by sinning), do not despair of Allah’s*

⁷ Related by Muslim.

⁸ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

Mercy. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He Who is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”⁹

In a *Hadith Qudsy* (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet’s words), Allah says, “O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and put your hope in Me, I will forgive whatever you have done, and I will not mind. O son of Adam, even if your sins were to reach the clouds of the sky, then you were to seek My Forgiveness, I would forgive you, and I will not mind. O son of Adam, if you were to come to me with an earthful of sins, and you were to meet Me not associating anything with Me, I will come to you with an earthful of forgiveness.”¹⁰

These and similar Words of Allah revive hope to a deadened will and stir up a dull and somewhat ashamed persona with a determination to resume walking towards Allah and renew life after a bad, passive past.

⁹ Translated meanings of Az-Zumar 39: 53.

¹⁰ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

2-The True Rebirth

Curious why people do not soar towards their Lord, on the wings of longing, rather than being driven to Him by whips of fear? Ignorance of Allah and His Religion is surely the cause behind this cold or alienated feeling – although humans will never find one who is kinder and more merciful to them than their Lord ﷻ¹. His Kindness and Tenderness are completely pure, untainted by any interests or aims, being attributes of His Absolute Perfection and Exalted Self.

The story of mankind shows that Allah created men and women to honor them, not humiliate them, and to empower them, not overpower them on earth. *﴿And surely, We gave you authority on the earth and appointed for you therein provisions (for your life). Little thanks do you give. And surely, We created you (your father Adam) and then gave you (human) form, then We said to the angels, “Prostrate to Adam.”﴾*²

The role of religion in people’s lives is to steer their course away from evil, towards good, and found their relationships on truth and justice in order for them to live this life without oppression or ignorance.

¹ Glorified and Exalted be He.

² Translated meanings of Al-‘Araf 7: 10-11.

Religion for them is as food is to their body; a necessity for their survival that corresponds to their nature and needs, and brings them true happiness. The Law of Allah ﷻ sides with the oppressed against the oppressor, with parents against the ingratitude of their children, and with any human wronged in their soul, honor, or wealth. Its purposes are mercy and welfare, not rigidity and punishment. The assigned acts of worship, which are fairly easy to perform, are to keep them connected with their Lord, praising His Blessings and remembering His Rights.

Eternity in heaven is what Allah desires for people, but many have refused and many still refuse to respond and follow His Straight Path. Thus desires started following them from every path, and the earth became filled with their transgressions and abominations.

Despite the crooked paths they have taken, callers to faith are still calling people to return to their Lord. Truly, His Happiness for their return to Him is beyond the description of words. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“Allah is happier with the repentance of His slave when he repents to Him than you would be if you were riding in a desert, and your mount carrying all your food and drink escaped from you. You despaired of finding it; you found a tree and lay in its shade, having lost hope of ever finding it, and suddenly found the mount standing in front of you. So you take hold of its reins, and out of your intense joy, you*

say, 'O Allah, You are my slave, and I am your lord,' making this mistake because of intense joy.'"³

An amazingly overwhelming welcome! Can there be more sincere happiness? Even sinless people can hardly ever find a heart that yearns to meet them with such a warm welcome. How about souls stained with sins against themselves and people? If covering their past sins was what they were met with, this would have been sufficient, filling them with peace and thankfulness. But to be welcomed with open arms and great anticipation, this is really amazing.

Truly, Allah is kinder to people and more ready to forgive than our limited minds can imagine.

Repentance like this brings a complete rebirth and becomes a separator between two different eras in one's life, the same as dawn is between darkness and light. It is not a transient return after which one relapses into former chaos and negligence, nor is it an unsuccessful attempt that lacks true will, endurance, and perseverance. The victorious return that pleases Allah is that in which man triumphs over weakness and laziness, crushes under his feet the germs of sins and vileness, breaks free from the chains of desires and ingratitude, and lifts himself up to higher levels of faith, righteousness, knowledge, and guidance.

³ Related by Muslim.

About those who achieve it, Allah ﷻ says: *And verily, I am indeed Forgiving to those who repent, believe (in My Oneness, and associate none in worship with Me) and do righteousness, and then continue in guidance.*»⁴

It is a life renewed after decadence and a decisive move that changes the features of oneself the same way as the dead earth turns fertile when abundantly supplied with water and nutrition.

It is a return, out of the past, that requires renewing oneself and reorganizing one's life to resume life with a better understanding of and relationship with our Lord, while praying with untiring lips, *“O Allah, You are my Lord. There is no god except You. You created me, and I am but Your slave. I am faithful to my covenant and my promise to You as much as I am able. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed on me, and I confess to You all my sins. Please forgive me, for no one can forgive sins except You.”*⁵

⁴ Translated meanings of Taha 20: 82.

⁵ Related by Al-Bukhari.

3-Live Within the Limits of Your Day

It is wrong to burden your day with worries of tomorrow. “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.” – Thomas Carlyle.

Jesus Christ’s ٠ prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread”¹ asks only for today’s bread. It does not complain about yesterday’s stale bread or worry about tomorrow’s bread. “This prayer teaches us to ask for today’s bread only. Today’s bread is the only kind of bread you can possibly eat.” – Dale Carnegie.²

Living within today was also the advice of Prophet Muhammad ٠, who said, “Whoever among you wakes up in the morning healthy in his body, secure in his house (or his family), and has his day’s food, it is as though the world has been brought into his possession.”

Any day, by having these core elements, one has the world. Health, security, and one’s day sufficiency for self and family are gifts that should not be belittled; they provide the force that enables the mind to think and create, and the body to work and produce.

¹ Matthew 6:11.

² Dale Carnegie’s quotes are from his book: How To Stop Worrying And Start Living.

Precipitating troubles that have not yet arisen is foolish. They are often mere illusions born of pessimism. Even if they are true, it is wrong to ruin today with past or future fears.

One should start each day as if it is an unconnected world, with its time and events, separate from all others. It was reported that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham ﷺ) would say when he ﷺ woke up at the break of the dawn, *“O Allah, this is a new creation. Begin it for me with obedience to You and end it for me with Your Forgiveness and Good Pleasure. Grant me in it a good deed which You accept from me, purify and double its reward. Any bad deed I do, forgive it for me. Truly, You are Forgiving, Merciful, Kind, and Generous.”*³

The strategy of dividing life into portions and receiving each with an enthusiastic spirit and renewed determination finds support in the life and words of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Upon waking up, he ﷺ used to say, *“We, and the whole kingdom, have entered a new day all belonging to Allah. O Allah, I ask You for the goodness of this day, its victory, its help, its light, its blessings, and its guidance. I seek refuge in You from the evil of this day and from the evil of what follows it.”*⁴ In the evening, he ﷺ would say the same.

³ Related by Al Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*.

⁴ Related by Abu Dawud.

He ﷺ would also supplicate, saying, *“O Allah, morning dawns upon me with blessings, good health, and protection from You, so bestow on me complete blessings, good health, and protection from You in this world and the Hereafter.”*⁵

This understanding of life, which is living in the present instead of dwelling on the past or projecting into the future, instills great courage in a believer. As the poor, righteous man, Abu Hazim, who challenged kings, said, “Between kings and me is one day. They no longer feel the delights of yesterday, and they and I both fear tomorrow. It is only today. What can it be?”

Imam Al-Hassan Al-Basri added, “The world is three days: Yesterday, with all that was in it, has gone. Tomorrow, you may never see it. As for today, it is yours, so work on it.”

Past pleasures departed with yesterday. Nothing of it can be retained. Tomorrow is hidden and is equally apprehended by the high and low. There remains only the present day, within whose limits live wise people who, by living in the present from a position of free will, self-motivation, and discernment of the current day’s goals, become a king. So where lies the superiority or privilege of worldly kings over others?

⁵ Related by Ibn As-Sunni, Amal Al-Yawm wal-Laylah.

Yet living in the present does not mean ignoring the future and not preparing oneself for it. Dale Carnegie said, “By all means take thought for the tomorrow, yes, careful thought and planning and preparation. But have no anxiety.”

Thinking of and planning for tomorrow is sagacity and broad vision. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised people to *“Take benefit of five before five: Your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your preoccupation, and your life before your death.”*⁶

This clarifies the difference between heeding the future and being overwhelmed by it; preparing oneself for it and becoming immersed in it; having eagerness to make use of today and anxious anticipation of tomorrow.

By waiting for tomorrow, life is stolen from us, one day after another, until our lifetime ends with our hands empty of any real accomplishment.

“How strange it is, our little procession of life,” wrote Stephen Leacock. “The child says: ‘When I am a big boy.’ But what is that? The big boy says: ‘When I grow up.’ And then, grown up, he says: ‘When I get married.’ But to be married, what is that after all? The thought changes to ‘When I am able to retire.’ And then, when retirement

⁶ Related by Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak.

comes, he looks back over the landscape traversed; a cold wind seems to sweep over it; somehow he has missed it all, and it is gone. Life, we learn too late, is in the living, in the tissue of every day and hour.”

About those who wasted their lives in vain and let their days escape from their hands unused, Allah says: *﴿And on the Day when the Hour will be established, the transgressors will swear they had remained but an hour. Thus they were deluded.﴾*⁷

⁷ Translated meanings of Ar-Rum 30: 55.

4-Your Life Is the Product of Your Thoughts

Happiness or misery, peace or anxiety springs from within.

You alone color your life bright or dark, the same way as a glass takes the color of the liquid it contains. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *“Whoever is content (with Allah’s Decree) will win His Good Pleasure, and whoever is discontent (with Allah’s Decree) will incur His Wrath.”*¹

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ visited a sick Bedouin suffering from fever and consoled him, saying, *“No harm, it is purification by the Will of Allah.”* The sick Bedouin replied, *“Rather, it is a fever burning in an old man that shall bring him to the grave.”* He ﷺ said, *“Yes, so it will be.”*²

This indicates that a person’s psychological state greatly determines the fate of his actions. The choice is his - whether to make his affliction a purification or a destruction.

The following two *Ayahs* prove how people’s positive and negative attitudes to the same subject matter significantly affect the outcome:

¹ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

² Related by Al-Bukhari.

﴿Among the Bedouins are some who look upon what they spend (in Allah's Cause) as a fine (a loss and a burden) and await your bad turns of fate; upon them shall be the bad turns.﴾³

﴿But among the Bedouins are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard what they spend as a means of attaining nearness to Allah and of obtaining invocations of the Messenger. Indeed, it (spending in Allah's Cause) brings them nearer to Him. Allah will admit them to His Mercy.﴾⁴

Both groups of people pay the required amount of obligatory charity (*Zakah*). The first group regards it as a burdensome, detestable fine, and wish evil for those who take it, whereas the second group finds pleasure in paying it, seeking with it the supplications of the Messenger ﷺ.

Within this sphere lie all life affairs.

The value of a work, as well as the person who does it, is closely connected with the ideas in his mind and the feelings within his heart. Dale Carnegie said, "Our thoughts make us what we are. Our mental attitude is the X factor that determines our fate. Emerson said: 'A man is what he thinks about all day long.' How could he possibly be anything else?

³ Translated meanings of At-Tawbah 9: 98.

⁴ Translated meanings of At-Tawbah 9: 99.

I now know with a conviction beyond all doubt that the biggest problem you and I have to deal with – in fact, almost the only problem we have to deal with – is choosing the right thoughts. If we can do that, we will be on the highroad to solving all our problems. The great philosopher who ruled the Roman Empire, Marcus Aurelius, summed it up in eight words – eight words that can determine your destiny: ‘Our life is what our thoughts make it.’

Yes, if we think happy thoughts, we will be happy. If we think miserable thoughts, we will be miserable. If we think fear thoughts, we will be fearful. If we think sickly thoughts, we will probably be ill. If we think failure, we will certainly fail. If we wallow in self-pity, everyone will want to shun us and avoid us. ‘You are not,’ said Norman Vincent Peale, ‘you are not what you think you are; but what you think, you are.’”⁵

A good and positive psychological state makes the little much and the individual capable of building a nation.

The future of man depends on the quality and performance of his psychological state, through which the course of his life is shaped. His soul alone is the source of his behavior and attitude, which are molded by the thoughts and the feelings filling it.

⁵ Dale Carnegie, *How To Stop Worrying And Start Living*

As we get further away from the surface of the earth, the shape and size of things change and along with it our view of what is beneath broadens and our horizon expands, although we have not changed. The same thing happens the higher man ascends into the levels of moral perfection and intellectual development. Many of his thoughts and sensibilities are refined and upgraded, and his judgments of people and things are altered.

Truly we are capable, if we choose to, of making ourselves good and wonderful examples. The way to achieve this is to renew our views and feelings the same way as a wasteland, after abundant rain and manure, is renewed. As this arid land is transformed into a green field, so can we transform into new people.

Spiritual reformation, therefore, is the first pillar needed for goodness to prevail in our life. *«Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.»*⁶ That is the unbreakable connection that Allah shows between purity of soul and happiness, with His Assurance of showering His full Blessings on those who believe in Him, on the pious and good doers. *«And if the people of the towns had believed and had piety, certainly, We would have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth.»*⁷

⁶ Translated meanings of Ar-Ra'd 13: 11.

⁷ Translated meanings of Al-A'raf 7: 96.

5-Nothing Will Happen Unless Decreed by Allah

The feeling that nothing whatsoever in this universe can slip from the Grasp of Allah pours peace and tranquility into the heart of a believer.

No matter how troublesome the circumstances are or how dark the situation is, they remain under the Will of Allah. *﴿The Will of Allah prevails, but most of mankind knows not.﴾*¹ This is the reliance that a Muslim places on his Lord after having done what ought to be done.

The Muslim puts his trust in Allah, and feels comfortable about what the future will bring after completing the necessary work, planning, and precautions entrusted to him by Allah.

It is meaningless to feel stress and anxiety about aspects of life beyond our will. Perhaps one regrets omissions and blames oneself for negligence, but turns of fate that one has no hand in leave no room for regret or blame, and, consequently, no stress or doubt.

With such reliance, life is faced with certainty and courage.

¹ Translated meanings of Yusuf 12: 21.

Without it, souls are empty of Allah, and events are seen as waves ebbing back and forth, in which some drown and some survive. They live controlled by the caprices of their hearts and plagued by events and doubts.

Belief in predestination imbues the soul with boldness to face today's and tomorrow's challenges. It gives the flowing events of life a new identity that is approached with general contentment rather than anxiety. Such a belief makes us face, while smiling, the loss of soul and belongings, which is the meaning of Allah's Words: *﴿Say, "Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us; He is our Protector." And in Allah let the believers put their trust. Say: "Do you wait for us (any fate) except for one of the two best things (martyrdom or victory)?"﴾*²

Whatever, all outcomes are good for believers; either winning the battle or dying trying, which is even superior, as it earns them the sure and everlasting reward from Allah.

For people without religion, whether they win or are defeated, punishment is sure to overtake them sooner or later. *﴿"While we wait for Allah to afflict you with a punishment either from Himself or at our hands, so wait; we too are waiting with you."﴾*³

² Translated meanings of At-Tawbah 9: 51-52.

³ Translated meanings of At-Tawbah 9: 52.

Separation from Allah, through distrust in Him and His Goodness, makes a person pessimistic.

Souls will not find rest until they are filled with pure faith in Allah, submission to Him, contentment with what He has ordained, and acceptance of the worst of what could happen as His Decree from which there is no escape, as instructed by the Prophet ﷺ, *“No slave of Allah will truly believe until he believes in predestination, the good and the bad thereof, and until he realizes that what has befallen him was not going to miss him and that which missed him was not going to befall him.”*⁴

Having this creed releases one from stress and pain, and lays down heavy burdens and anxieties. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *“From the happiness of the son of Adam is his acceptance of what Allah has decreed for him, and from the misery of the son of Adam is his rejection of what Allah has decreed for him.”*⁵

Yet it must be emphasized that submission and resignation begin when circumstances are beyond the ordinary will of control and outside the domain of free choice.

There should be no hiding behind fate as an excuse when one can or cannot do something.

⁴ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

⁵ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

By watching the subduing turns of fates – which are beyond our free will – and discerning Allah’s Work in outcomes, whether sweet or bitter, our emotions are regulated and kept from becoming intense or exaggerated.

This moderation is characteristic of wise and experienced people, who are temperate in their joy and sadness, and their overall reactions, meeting that which is pleasant or unpleasant with calm feelings. This is the gist of Allah’s Words: *﴿No calamity happens on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees, before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah, in order that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor rejoice in what has been given to you; Allah likes not prideful boasters.﴾*⁶

The aim is not prevention of the natural sensations of pain or pleasure; rather, it is restraint of overwhelming indulgence, whether excessive joy whose ecstasy may distract from what is right or excessive grief whose agony may crush the will.

Dale Carnegie said, “No one living has enough emotion and vigor to fight the inevitable and, at the same time, enough left over to create a new life. Choose one or the other. You can either bend with the inevitable sleet-storms of life – or you can resist them and break!”

⁶ Translated meanings of Al-Hadid 57: 22-23.

An unwavering discernment of Allah's Work in all happenings, as a fruit of belief in predestination, keeps emotions from fluctuating high and low, and renders them moderate, controlled, and lenient in the face of afflictions. *"The analogy of a believer is that of a fresh tender plant; from whatever direction the wind comes, it bends. But when the wind subsides, it becomes upright again; such is a believer when afflicted with calamities, whereas the impious is like a pine tree which stands rigid and straight, until Allah snaps it when He so wills."*⁷

⁷ Related by Al-Bukhari.

6-Your Time is Your Asset

Work is the vocation of the living; idleness is death.

Time idly wasted, according to Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim, is even more severe than death. *“Wasting time cuts you off from Allah and the Hereafter, whereas death cuts you off from worldly life and its people.”*

This world is people’s farm, whose yield they harvest in the Hereafter. Those who sow nothing here will reap nothing there, only losses and regrets.

Many are heedless to the gifts of health and leisure. *“Two blessings which many people do not appreciate: health and leisure,”*¹ Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said.

Many people with healthy bodies and plenty of time wander aimlessly through this life without hope, occupation, or a cause to which to dedicate their life. *«Did you think that We created you in vain (without any purpose), and that to Us you would not be returned? Exalted be Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth.»*²

Life, earth, and the heavens were created with a true law, which mankind must know and live by in this world, for they will be asked about it tomorrow. Prophet

¹ Related by Al-Bukhari.

² Translated meanings of Al-Mu’minun 23: 115-116.

Muhammad ﷺ said, *“The two feet of a slave will not move on the Day of Resurrection until he is asked about his lifetime – on what did he spend it? His knowledge – what did he do with it? His wealth – from where did he earn it and on what did he spend it? And his body – how did he wear it out?”*³

Man’s self is active all the time. If he does not busy himself with truth, it will busy him with falsehood. If it is not engaged in a fast and constructive motion of good works, efforts, growth, and production, it will be swept away by reckless thoughts and pulled into an eddy of trivialities and nonsense.

Dale Carnegie explained this, saying, “When we are not busy, our minds tend to become a near-vacuum. Every student of physics knows that ‘nature abhors a vacuum.’ The nearest thing to a vacuum that you and I will probably ever see is the inside of an incandescent electric-light bulb. Break that bulb and nature forces air in to fill the theoretically empty space.

Nature also rushes in to fill the vacant mind. With what? Usually with emotions. Why? Because emotions of worry, fear, hate, jealousy, and envy are driven by primeval vigor and the dynamic energy of the jungle. Such emotions are so violent that they tend to drive out of our minds all peaceful thoughts and emotions.”

³ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

The best way to protect a man's life and mind is to have a time- and energy-consuming course that leaves no space for evil to steal anything from it.

Dale Carnegie said, "Why does such a simple thing as keeping busy help to drive out anxiety? Because of a law – one of the most fundamental laws ever revealed by psychology. And that law is: that it is utterly impossible for any human mind, no matter how brilliant, to think of more than one thing at any given time."

True, and confirm the Saying of Allah: *«Allah has not made for any man two hearts inside his body.»*⁴ Same as the mind cannot think of two separate things at the same time, it cannot be occupied by two contraries.

The distribution of work in Islam throughout the day and life is based on this law – leaving no gaps that may be filled by falsities that are empty of truth.

A whole course summed up in the short yet comprehensive *Surah* (Qur'anic chapter) of Al-'Asr (Time), where Allah says: *«By time, indeed, mankind is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and exhort one another to the truth, and exhort one another to patience.»*⁵

⁴ Translated meanings of Al-Ahzab 33: 4.

⁵ Translated meanings of Al-'Asr 103: 1-3.

Continuous loss is inevitable with every moment, as explained by the wise Muslim scholar Al-Hassan Al-Basri, *“O Son of Adam, you are no more than a few days. Every day that goes, a portion of you goes.”* He imagined every day calling out with every sunrise, *“O Son of Adam, I am a new day; I am a witness over your actions. Take advantage of me, for I will never return until the Day of Resurrection.”*

Excluded from loss are only those who heed time and grasp the four means of safety, or characteristics for success, given in the aforementioned *Surah*: Faith in Allah, good deeds, practicing and teaching the truth, and showing and mutual reminding of patience with the hurdles that lie ahead of those adhering to the truth.

7-Bring Yourself to Account

Have any of us ever thought of recording the good and the bad things we do, through which we can from time to time know our balance of good and bad deeds, profits and losses?

Every important deed has a record of inputs and outputs, profits and losses, except man's life, in which he proceeds vaguely, without caring to know whether it is on the rise or the decline.

If it were left up to people to live randomly and behave as they like without taking heed of a Watcher and Careful Account Taker of all things, it would probably have been understandable (although still reckless and foolish) that they squander their lives as spendthrifts squander their money, forget about the past and the self-modifying experiences through which they have passed, and rush into the future fearless of sins and mistakes.

But, the fact is, Allah has recording angels who write down everything we do, from the tiniest action to the largest. And on the Day of Judgment: *﴿The record of deeds will be placed (open), and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it, and they will say, "Woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great without recording it?" And they will find everything they*

did presented before them. And your Lord treats no one with injustice. ﴿١﴾¹

Is it not wise to search our deeds and try to discover our own special record?

Is it not important to estimate the magnitude of the good and the bad we do?

This is what Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised, “*Bring yourself to account before you are brought to account. And weigh your deeds before your deeds are weighed for you.*”² And, “*The wise is he who reproaches and judges himself and works for what is after death, and the feeble (neglectful) is he who pursues his desires and vainly put hopes in Allah (for pardon and Paradise).*”³

The Muslim writer, Ibn Al-Muqaffa’, recommended that people keep a record of their doings, the right page for the good and the left page for the bad.

Whereas Dale Carnegie recommended keeping a record of the foolish things we have done and criticize ourselves. “I have a folder in my private filing cabinet marked ‘FTD’ - short for ‘Fool Things I Have Done.’ I put in that folder written records of the foolish things I have been guilty of.

¹ Translated meanings of Al-Khaf 18: 49.

² Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

³ Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

I sometimes dictate these memos to my secretary, but sometimes they are so personal, so stupid, that I am ashamed to dictate them, so I write them out in longhand.

I can still recall some of the criticisms of Dale Carnegie that I put in my 'FTD' folders fifteen years ago. If I had been utterly honest with myself, I would now have a filing cabinet bursting out at the seams with these 'FTD' memos. I can truthfully repeat what King Saul said more than twenty centuries ago: 'I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly.'

When I get out my 'FTD' folders and re-read the criticisms I have written of myself, they help me deal with the toughest problem I shall ever face: the management of Dale Carnegie.

I used to blame my troubles on other people; but as I have grown older – and wiser, I hope – I have realized that I myself, in the last analysis, am to blame for almost all my misfortunes. Lots of people have discovered that, as they grow older. 'No one but myself,' said Napoleon at St. Helena, 'no one but myself can be blamed for my fall. I have been my own greatest enemy – the cause of my own disastrous fate.'"

8-Turn Your Lemons Into Lemonade

“Two men looked through prison bars; one saw mud, the other saw stars!”

The first thing Islam asks you to do is to think about and calmly reconsider your feelings about what has befallen you. *﴿It may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, and you know not.﴾*¹

Who knows? Perhaps something good comes from something bad. Perhaps an opportunity is wrapped within a calamity. As the saying goes: “every cloud has a silver lining.”

Who knows? Perhaps difficult times, through good management, lead to better days, and positive outcomes emerge from an unpleasant, difficult, or even painful situation.

Most of us complain of surrounding circumstances and thereby double our lacking and suffering, although troubles and pains are the soil that nourished great figures whose skills bloomed out of heaps of difficulties and struggles.

¹ Translated meanings of Al-Baqarah 2: 216.

Dale Carnegie said, “The more I have studied the careers of men of achievement, the more deeply I have been convinced that a surprisingly large number of them succeeded because they started out with handicaps that spurred them on to great endeavor and great rewards. As William James said: ‘Our infirmities help us unexpectedly.’

Yes, it is highly probable that Milton wrote better poetry because he was blind and that Beethoven composed better music because he was deaf. Helen Keller’s brilliant career was inspired and made possible because of her blindness and deafness.”

Great personalities have thrived in tough environments, putting the responsibility over their shoulders, not behind their backs. They accepted their bitter circumstances while giving free rein to their skills to transform their affliction into a gift.

That is the greatness; the ability to turn our lemons into lemonade, as Dale Carnegie quoted Harry Emerson Fosdick in his book, *The Power to See it Through*, “Wherever did we get the idea that secure and pleasant living, the absence of difficulty, and the comfort of ease, ever of themselves made people either good or happy? Upon the contrary, people who pity themselves go on pitying themselves even when they are laid softly on a cushion, but always in history character and happiness have come to people in all sorts of circumstances, good,

bad, and indifferent, when they shouldered their personal responsibility.”

Such power to change a calamity into a blessing is beyond the reach of those addicted to complaint and discontent, as they prove the most unsuccessful in imbuing their life with a new meaning of happiness when it is taken from them or – more correctly – is not as they like.

Dale Carnegie said, “Napoleon had everything men usually crave – glory, power, riches – yet he said at St. Helena: ‘I have never known six happy days in my life’; while Helen Keller – blind, deaf, dumb – declared: ‘I have found life so beautiful.’ If half a century of living has taught me anything at all, it has taught me that ‘Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.’”

Steadfast and purposeful people meet life with the wideness of their souls before it meets them with the afflictions it has in store. The same way as the body produces antibodies to fight and ward off germs, these people produce special meanings within that blend with their life’s ups and downs, endowing them with new subjects and titles.

Scornful of the impotent attempts of his enemies to torture him, the dignified scholar and valiant striver, Ibn Taymiyyah, said:

*What can my enemies do to me?
My paradise is in my heart (with me wherever I am).
Imprisoning me is seclusion with my Lord.
Exiling me is a travel in Allah's Cause.
Killing me is martyrdom.*

Distressing afflictions turned into blessings in their eyes, received with a smile rather than despair.

That is how liabilities are transformed into assets and adversities into blessings.

People certainly vary in that capability of profiting from catastrophes, which is the measure of the strength of their will power, and there lies the difference, as explained by William Bolitho: "The most important thing in life is not to capitalize on your gains. Any fool can do that. The really important thing is to profit from your losses. That requires intelligence; and it makes the difference between a man of sense and a fool."

When 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas lost his eyesight and knew he would be forever blind, he did not bewail his fate, but contentedly accepted his affliction and assured himself, saying:

*If Allah removes the light from my eyes,
My tongue and ears still have in them light.
My heart is intelligent and my mind is not crooked,
And my tongue is sharp like a warrior's sword.*

Dale Carnegie said, “An old truth that the Greeks taught five hundred years before Christ was born: ‘The best things are the most difficult.’ Harry Emerson Fosdick repeated it again in the twentieth century: ‘Happiness is not mostly pleasure; it is mostly victory.’ Yes, the victory that comes from a sense of achievement, of triumph, of turning our lemons into lemonades.”

9- Would You Take a Million for What You Have?

Is it a small thing that you go out of your home shaking both your hands, walking with steady steps, filling up your chest with early morning breath, and enjoying the sunshine in your eyes?

If you are heedless to the healthiness of your body, the integrity of your organs, and the perfection of your faculties... wake up quickly.

Your capital in this life is not the gold and silver you have. Your true capital, your real wealth, is the faculties that Allah has given you, such as intellect, ability, freedom, and the highest of these gifts – good health.

“Would you sell both your eyes for a billion dollars?” Dale Carnegie wondered, “What would you take for your two legs? Your hands? Your hearing? Your children? Your family? Add up your assets, and you will find that you won’t sell what you have for all the gold ever amassed. But do we appreciate all this? Ah, no. As Schopenhauer said, ‘We seldom think of what we have but always of what we lack.’ Yes, the tendency to ‘seldom think of what we have but always of what we lack’ is the greatest tragedy on earth.”

It was narrated that Ibn Al-Samak, a righteous religious scholar, was attending the counsel of Caliph Harun Al-Rashid who, having asked for water, said to him, “Advise me.”

With the cup raised to his mouth, Ibn Al-Samak asked him, “O Emir of the Believers, were this drink of water withheld from you, would you pay your kingdom for it?”

The Caliph said, “Yes.”

Having drunk it, Ibn Al-Samak asked him, “Were it held inside you and you could not void it (could not urinate), would you pay your kingdom to void it?”

The Caliph said, “Yes.”

Ibn Al-Samak said, “There is no goodness in a kingdom that is not worth drinking or voiding a gulp of water.”

Without attention, we have, and without effort, we get that which a king might sacrifice his kingdom for – drinking water and passing it out.

Do we remember such a bounty of Allah upon us? Do we appreciate it? Do we thank Him for it?

Getting used to being healthy makes us forget or belittle how good being healthy is; sometimes, it takes a crisis or loss of health to appreciate it. But no matter how

little or slight it is in the sight of people, it remains complete in the Sight of Allah and will be wholly, with all its elements, accounted for before Him.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *“By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, a person will come on the Day of Resurrection with good deeds which, if placed on a mountain, would weigh it down; then only one of Allah’s Blessings is to come forth (and take what it deserves from the servant’s good deeds) and almost exhausts them all, if not for the Mercy that Allah bestows.”*¹

Hence, Allah’s Words: *﴿And if you would count (the numerous benefits of) a Blessing of Allah, never could you be able to count it. Truly, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾*²

All life is a gift for which Allah deserves thanking for endowing us with, soul and sensation, and a whole universe abundantly furnished with supplies and replete with signs pointing to the Creator. *﴿How can you disbelieve in Allah Who gave you life when you initially had no life? Then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you (back) to life, and then to Him you will be returned.﴾*³

¹ Related by Al-Tabarani.

² Translated meanings of Al-Nahl 16: 18.

³ Translated meanings of Al-Baqarah 2: 28.

Our senses are our tools for interacting with this universe, exploring it, and learning from it, and should, when flooded by its power, beauty, and immensity all around, shake with gratitude to He Who honored us with life. *﴿And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing, and given you hearing, sight, and hearts that you might give thanks (to Allah).﴾⁴*

Whenever our sensibilities grow blunt, indifferent, or careless, or we no longer value the incessant flow of Allah's Blessings, a good contemplation, after freeing the mind from the dullness of familiarity and inattention, will help awaken the senses, renew the feelings, and open up our eyes to the heavens and earth all put in our service, which helps the mind better understand Allah's Call: *﴿O mankind, worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, that you may become pious. He Who has made for you the earth a bed (spread out), and the sky a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky, and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. So do not set up rivals (equals) to Allah while you know (that He has no partner, peer, or equal).﴾⁵*

⁴ Translated meanings of Al-Nahl 16: 78.

⁵ Translated meanings of Al-Baqarah 2: 21-22.

10-Come to Prayer! Come to Success!

Are souls to be left abandoned, wandering in the labyrinths of this life, without a Lord Who protects them or a Helper Who supports them?

No matter how strong man claims himself to be, he is weak. Whenever he is alone, desolation and uncertainty overwhelm him.

He may end up at branching roads and feel at a loss about which to take.

If he chooses the wrong path, he may continue toiling through it for days or years without reaching a destination. This is because initially he started without good guidance.

Man direly needs one who inspires in him the correct choice and guides him to the truth whenever mystified or confused.

The human body is susceptible to pain in any place. It is like an open city that can be attacked at any time, from any side. If he contemplates this, man will realize that every atom of his body can be a gateway to a chronic disease, causing him great pain; similarly, he will realize that an unexpected turn of events may affect his entire life.

We are truly in great need of continual good and the removal of hardships through a strong relationship with our Creator that makes life flow easily, peacefully, and blessedly.

Prayer guarantees all this to a believer.

Along each day's route, Islam designated five gracious pauses for Allah, distributed at specific times throughout the day, during which mankind is directed to meet their Lord, open their hearts, and speak their minds to Him, starting by praising Him and acknowledging His Grandeur, followed by requesting His Blessings and the averting of evils, asking for His Help and seeking His Contentment, and shoring up their deficient knowledge with His Perfect Knowledge and their inadequate power with His Supreme Power.

In a *Hadith Qudsy*, Allah says: *"I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.*

When the servant says, ﴿All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of existence﴾, Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.'

When he says, ﴿The All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful﴾, Allah says, 'My servant has extolled Me.'

When he says, ﴿The Owner (Master) of the Day of Judgment﴾, Allah says, ‘My servant has glorified Me.’

When he says, ﴿You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything)﴾, Allah says, ‘This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.’

When he says, ﴿Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not the path of those who have incurred Your Anger, nor of those who have gone astray﴾¹, Allah says, ‘This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.’”²

The body, racing on the tracks of this life, becomes covered with sweat and dust, as does the soul; it becomes overcast by clouds and gloom.

After each long round, it needs some time to tidy up and restore purity and order to that which has been soiled or disheveled.

Prayer is no more than a few moments that recover this lost or sought-after perfection.

Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri narrated that he heard Prophet Muhammad ﷺ say, “*The five daily prayers provide expiation for whatever occurs in the time between them.*”

¹ Translated meanings of Al-Fatihah 1: 2-7.

² Related by Muslim.

Imagine a man has work and there are five rivers between his house and his workplace. He would go to his workplace and work as much as Allah willed, becoming dirty or sweaty. Then, whenever he came to a river, he would bathe. What would remain of his dirt?

It is like this with prayer; whenever he commits a sin, he supplicates and seeks forgiveness, so he is forgiven for whatever has preceded it.”³

Too much is relinquished in the struggle for existence or the battle for bread, into which people throw themselves while the instinct most active in their blood is selfishness, against which the ideals of reciprocal mercy, altruism, and benevolence are reduced to faint impulses.

Abandoning people to such fiery emotions will inevitably stifle their human virtues. No wonder, then, that Allah prescribed prayers throughout the day and night as a lifeline thrown out of the blaze every now and then. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Allah has an angel that calls out at every prayer: O Children of Adam! Rise to the fires which you have ignited and put them out.”⁴

He ﷺ also said, “You burn! You burn! And once you pray Subh (Dawn) Prayer, it washes it out. Then you burn! You burn! And once you pray Zhuhr (Noon) Prayer, it washes it out. Then you burn! You burn! And once you

³ Related by Al-Tabarani.

⁴ Related by Al-Tabarani.

*pray 'Asr (Afternoon) Prayer, it washes it out. Then you burn! You burn! And once you pray Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer, it washes it out. Then you burn! You burn! And once you pray 'Isha' (Night) Prayer, it washes it out. Then you sleep, and the writing down (of your deeds) stops until you wake up."*⁵

The Hadith portrays the minor sins committed throughout the complex and entangled lives of people, and the softening and pacifying influence that prayers have on them.

Prayer lifts up the soul to heaven whenever it clings to earth, and connects it with its Lord whenever it is severed from Him through heedlessness or distraction.

About the power that the experience of prayer has, Dale Carnegie narrated, "As I said before, even the scientists are turning to religion. Take, for example, Dr. Alexis Carrel, who wrote, '*Man, the Unknown*' and won the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon any scientist, the Nobel Prize. Dr. Carrel said in a Reader's Digest article, 'Prayer is the most powerful form of energy one can generate. It is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. Prayer, like radium, is a source of luminous, self-generating energy. In prayer, human

⁵ Related by Al-Tabarani.

beings seek to augment their finite energy by addressing themselves to the Infinite source of all energy. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe. We pray that a part of this power be apportioned to our needs.

Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled and we arise strengthened and repaired. Whenever we address God in fervent prayer, we change both soul and body for the better. It could not happen that any man or woman could pray for a single moment without some good result.”

This is best explained by Allah’s Words: *﴿And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me, (answer them), I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright.﴾*⁶

Giving your first thought upon waking up to Allah surrounds you with power and protection all day long.

Having woken up mindful of Allah, sought His Refuge, and asked for His Protection, indeed Allah will not forsake those who seek Him or withhold what they need. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “*Anyone who prays Subh is under Allah’s Protection, so do not subject yourself to His*

⁶ Translated meanings of Al-Baqarah 2: 186.

Punishment by breaching His Protection (i.e. harming those whom He protects) in any way; anyone who breaches His Protection in any way, Allah will seize, and then throw on his face into Hellfire.”⁷

That is how close the connection between Allah and His devoted servants is. He not only takes them into His Care, but regards them as His Own Self. Any transgression against them is a transgression against Himself (Glorified and Exalted be He). *“Anyone who antagonizes a devotee of Mine, I declare war against him. My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.”⁸*

Such is Allah’s Grace towards those who, with their whole being, live perpetually connected to Him through prayers and other righteous works, and whenever some difficulty comes their way, run to Him as a child runs to the protective arms of his father, for Him to ward off harm and grant them safety. It was reported in a Hadith by Abu Dawud that whenever some difficulty arose, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would hurry to prayer.

⁷ Related by Muslim.

⁸ *Hadith Qudsy* related by Al-Bukhari.

Prayer fulfills basic psychological needs which have their roots in human nature. Dale Carnegie wrote, “Why does religious faith bring us such peace and calm and fortitude? I will let William James answer that. He says, ‘The turbulent billows of the fretful surface leave the deep parts of the ocean undisturbed; and to him who has a hold on vaster and more permanent realities, the hourly vicissitudes of his personal destiny seem relatively insignificant things. The really religious person is, accordingly, unshakable and full of equanimity, and calmly ready for any duty that the day may bring forth.’

If we are worried and anxious – why not try God? Why not, as Immanuel Kant said, ‘accept a belief in God because we need such a belief’? Why not link ourselves now ‘with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe’?

Even if you are not a religious person by nature or training – even if you are an out-and-out skeptic – prayer can help you much more than you believe, for it is a practical thing.

What do I mean, practical? I mean that prayer fulfills these three very basic psychological needs which all people share, whether they believe in God or not:

1. Prayer helps us to put into words exactly what is troubling us. It is almost impossible to deal with a problem while it remains vague and nebulous. Praying, in

a way, is very much like writing our problem down on paper. If we ask for help for a problem – even from God – we must put it into words.

2. Prayer gives us a sense of sharing our burdens, of not being alone. Few of us are so strong that we can bear our heaviest burdens, our most agonizing troubles, all by ourselves. Sometimes our worries are of so intimate a nature that we cannot discuss them even with our closest relatives or friends. Then prayer is the answer. Any psychiatrist will tell us that when we are pent-up and tense, and in an agony of spirit, it is therapeutically good to tell someone our troubles. When we cannot tell anyone else – we can always tell God.

3. Prayer puts into force an active principle of doing. It is a first step toward action. I doubt if anyone can pray for some fulfillment, day after day, without benefiting from it – in other words, without taking some steps to bring it to pass. A world-famous scientist said: ‘Prayer is the most powerful form of energy one can generate.’”

Caringly and lovingly, Allah warns mankind not to trust their own power as sufficient, as this deficient view would deprive them of the blessings of providence and keep them forever imprisoned within the confines of their own weakness and ignorance.

In a *Hadith Qudsy*, Allah says: “*O My slaves, all of you are astray except those whom I guide, so seek My Guidance and I will guide you.*”

O My slaves, all of you are hungry except those whom I feed, so ask me for food and I will feed you.

O My slaves, all of you are naked except those whom I clothe, so ask me for clothing and I will clothe you.

O My slaves, you err by night and by day and I forgive all sins, so ask for My forgiveness and I will forgive you.”⁹

Have you felt the sincerity of persistence to lead back strayed humans to Him, their Lord, in order to receive provisions, place their reliance on Him, and empower themselves with His Infinite Power?

Truly, only those who are poor in their hearts and minds live away from such inexhaustible, divine goodness.

⁹ Related by Muslim.

11-Raising Yourself from Humanity to Spirituality

Ordinary souls experience serene moments, pure from earthly dross and defilement, when any bitter or harsh feelings they have are softened, and their thoughts are elevated from earth to the pure and fresh air of heaven, where a sense of peace and tranquility pervades their being.

But they soon descend to their low ground, where they live most of their time, and glance at these moments of true spiritual ecstasy as transient flashes or a star glowing from a far-off galaxy.

Contrarily, great souls live with a much wider outlook from a higher altitude of life, much keener awareness, and stronger feelings.

They are upright on the straight path, from which they rarely swerve.

They are accustomed to soaring high, and rarely fly low.

If they come down, they soon flap their wings and ascend to the heights where they dwell.

Allah created mankind as such, and so they have varied in their levels since the beginning of time.

Such variations include common people bound by the shackles of their limited goals from which they sometimes break free, and special people who have emancipated themselves from most worldly shackles, one of which may cling to their feet and burden them for some time before they shake it off.

These special people vary among themselves in righteousness and virtue, just as stars vary in their luminosity.

While people believe they can uplift themselves to the level of those who – although far away – are still within reach, some, because of the wide gap, are beyond imagination.

The extent of their diversity is indeed infinite. And so was the Wisdom of Allah that He chose the carriers of His Revelations from among the best of the chosen few, who excel over others in everything.

If a race was held between the most gifted and skilled people ever to have lived, whose intuition was the strongest, whose hearts were the purest, and whose morals were the most virtuous, the sole winners would be the Prophets of Allah.

The Prophets were men of matchless intelligence, strength of determination, far reaching goals, penetrating sagacity, and full insight into human nature and

inclinations. It is a great error to think that it was merely goodness or simplicity of character that qualified these Messengers to lead their people during eras of impediment and naivety.

True leadership of nations, past or present, is realized only through people gifted with high spiritual and moral capacities that are able to draw the multitudes around them with willing hearts and ready shoulders. *﴿And remember Our servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – men of might and vision. We purified them with a pure thought, remembrance of the Home (of the Hereafter). And indeed, in Our Sight they are of the chosen and the best.﴾*¹

Have you grasped the secret of their greatness within the folds of this concise Qur'anic description? It is power and vision; men of bravery without a tinge of incapability, and discernment without a tinge of ignorance.

They were chosen above all other generations of humanity, as when choosing from among marvelous bouquets, leaving what is beautiful for what is even more beautiful. This is Allah's Election or Choice.

Glancing at the Custodians of the Blessed Revelations, your eyes will not miss their noble foreheads crowned by grandeur and virtue and adorned with certitude and

¹ Translated meanings of Sad 38: 45-47.

truthfulness; their prominence almost hiding and dimming all other humanity.

These were the Prophets who were entrusted with the guidance of people for long periods during the early eras.

Amidst this company of righteous men, you behold, with veneration and awe, Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah ﷺ, the unique Prophet, who was entrusted with the guidance of humanity to the end of time, sent with a Book (the Glorious Qur’an) that shall remain among them as long as day and night shall last, in whose person was gathered the morals and beliefs destined for the welfare and righteousness of the first and last generations.

You can easily become acquainted with the timeless wisdom – that is the highest of all ideals in flesh and blood – from the Book with which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent.

His emotional and intellectual life sprang from his pure and clear knowledge of Allah, his continuous remembrance of Him, and his steadfast attachment to the meanings of perfection in His Divine Names and Attributes.

Truly, the world, from its beginning to its end, will not know a human who walked on earth with his heart attached to heaven as did Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah ﷺ.

“O my Lord, make me thankful to You, always remembering You, always fearing You, always obeying You, to You humble, tearful, and repentant. O my Lord, accept my repentance, wash off my sin, answer my supplication, strengthen my argument, guide my heart, correct my tongue, and remove ill will from my chest.”²

He ﷺ was the best who perfectly realized in himself and those around him the life of a perfect human.

Indeed, one of the most prominent attributes of great spiritual guides is the ability to trigger energy within those who approach them, releasing their hidden powers to serve the ultimate truth, each according to his gifts.

Therefore, sinners who desire repentance, the ignorant who desire knowledge, the confused who desire peace, the sick who desire healing, and the imperfect who desire perfection, will, in their endeavors to reach their aims, learn much about Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through guidance from a Qur’anic verse or benefit from a piece of his wisdom.

² Related by Al-Thirmidhi.

Please pen your self-renewal plan
and share it with Ahlan at
Ahlan.Egypt@hotmail.com

