

Chapter Three

The noble character of the Qur'an

Faith or belief in God must be applied in our life and exhibited in our character and behavior. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(I have been sent to implement the most noble of character)
Hakim, Baihaqi and Malik

In other words, the prophet was emphasizing the importance of true and noble character and how we behave with others.

In this chapter we will explore this concept as we discuss the following Qur'anic characteristics:

- 1- Taqwa or God consciousness or piety
- 2- Patient perseverance
- 3- Thanking God and acknowledging His blessings
- 4- Du'a or calling on God
- 5- Being kind, forgiving and merciful
- 6- Being truthful and not cheating others
- 7- Resolve and determination

Religion is meant to make us better human beings and improve our behavior. The goal of prayer, fasting and giving charity is to purify our hearts from any ill feelings towards others, and to understand that our faith in God means helping others and of being of service to them. To reach out to the poor, needy, oppressed and weak and vulnerable is an expression of

our faith and an acknowledgement of God's blessings. If we do not reach out and help our fellow human beings then we have no faith in God and our words "We believe" are hollow and have no meaning or substance. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(You will not enter paradise till you believe; and you will not believe until you love one another) Bokhari

The Prophet (PBUH) also explained that our brothers and sisters have valid rights over us, and that we must fulfill our obligations towards them. Among these rights are the following:

- 1- To visit them when they are sick
- 2- To help them when they need our help
- 3- To greet them when we see them
- 4- Not to distance ourselves from them, but to stay close
- 5- To cover their faults, and to forgive them when they make a mistake and have mercy
- 6- To say Du'a (prayer to God) on their behalf
- 7- To witness their funeral when they die and seek God's forgiveness for them

Taqwa (God-consciousness or piety)

This concept implies the following:

- 1- That we love God and wish to please Him
- 2- We are at the same time fearful of His punishment and that we do not want to do anything that may displease God
- 3- That we are sincere and devoted in worshipping God and that we obey His orders
- 4- That we are aware that we are accountable to God, therefore we watch our behavior

Loving God and pleasing Him

Our example is Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was faithful to God and turned to Him often. He stood in prayer all night, and when asked by his wife : Why do you do that since God has already forgiven you? He answered : (Should I not then be a grateful servant of God) Bokhari.

The Qur'an explains to us that loving God means striving in His cause and getting close to Him:

﴿يَتَّيِبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾﴾

O ye who believe! do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive with might and main in His cause: that ye may prosper.

Al-Maeda 5 : 35

Our love of God stems from our appreciation of His many blessings and that we owe everything to Him.

Fearing God and fearing His displeasure

One day we will stand before God and answer for all our deeds. It is this accountability that should shape and influence our behavior. We fear God's punishment, yet we are hopeful of His mercy and forgiveness:

﴿بَنِيْ عِبَادِيْ اِنِّيْ اَنَا الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾﴾

Tell My servants that I am indeed the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,

Al-Hijr 15 : 49

﴿وَاَنَّ عَذَابِيْ هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْاَلِيْمُ ﴿٥٠﴾﴾

And that My Penalty will be indeed the most grievous Penalty.

Al-Hijr 15 : 50

On the day of accountability nothing will help us except our good deeds:

﴿يَتَّيِبُهَا النَّاسُ اَتَقُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَاَحْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِيْ وَالِدٌ عَن وَّلَدٍ وَلَا مَوْلُوْدٌ هُوَ جَارٍ عَن وَّلَدٍ شَيْئًا اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُوْرُ ﴿٥٠﴾﴾

O mankind! do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his

father. Verily, the promise of Allah is true: let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

Luqman 31 : 33

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

Al-Hashr 59 : 18

Sincerity, devotion and obedience to God

We are told to obey God's orders and to follow His straight way, for He knows what is good for us; to be sincere and devoted in our worship and service to God:

﴿ قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ ﴾

Say: "Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;
Az-Zumar 39 : 11

﴿ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴾

"And I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam."
Az-Zumar 39 : 12

﴿ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾

Say: "I would, if I disobeyed my Lord, indeed have fear of the Penalty of a Mighty Day."
Az-Zumar 39 : 13

﴿ قُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ دِينِي ﴾

Say: "It is Allah I serve, with my sincere (and exclusive) devotion:
Az-Zumar 39 : 14

The paths of Allah are straight leading to paradise; other path lead to misguidance and to Hell fire:

﴿ وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ ﴾

Verily, this is My Way leading straight: follow it; follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) Path; thus doth He command you, that ye may be righteous.

Al-An'am 6 : 153

﴿ أَفَمَن أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ تَقْوَىٰ مِن ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَن أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ ٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ ﴾

Which then is best? He that layeth his foundation on piety to Allah and His Good Pleasure? Or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand cliff ready to crumble to pieces? And it doth crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell. And Allah guideth not people that do wrong.

At-Tawba 9 : 109

Obeying prophet Muhammad is clearly a way of success and proof of our obedience to God:

﴿ وَمَا آتَاكُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَٱنتَهُوا ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلْعِقَابِ ﴿٧﴾ ﴾

. So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you. And fear Allah; for Allah is strict in Punishment.

Al-Hashr 59 : 7

Be aware of your accountability and watch your behavior

Being conscious of Allah means that we watch our behavior and avoid making mistakes because we are accountable. If we do commit sin or make mistakes, we should repent and turn to God seeking His forgiveness, making a pledge not to commit that sin again, and to follow this bad deed with a good deed to wipe it out. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(Fear Allah and be conscious of Him at all times; and follow a bad deed with a good deed, it will cancel the bad deed; and treat others with a good and noble character and righteous behavior)

Termedhi & Abou Dawood

The understanding that everything that we do is being watched closely and duly recorded will allow us to watch our behavior:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَتَعَلَّمْ مَا تَوْسَّوَسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ ۗ وَخَنُّ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ

الْوَرِيدِ ﴿٥٠﴾

It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.

Qa F 50 : 16

﴿ إِذْ يَتَلَقَى الْمُتَلَقِيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ ﴿٥١﴾

Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and note them), one sitting on the right and one on the left.

Qa F 50 : 17

﴿ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ ﴿٥٢﴾

Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it).

Qa F 50 : 18

We may be lured and tempted by material things as most people seek immediate pleasure and self-gratification. But the Qur'an warns against such behavior and advises sacrifice, patience and Taqwa:

﴿ قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي

الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

Say: "Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee; so fear Allah, O ye that understand; that (so) ye may prosper."

Al-Maeda 5 : 100

Working closely with others and cooperating in virtue and doing good will help us:

﴿ وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾

Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancor: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment.

Al-Maeda 5 : 2

The Qur'an describes the characteristics of those who possess this quality of Taqwa:

﴿ ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣﴾

This is the book; in it is guidance, sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah;

Al-Baqara 2 : 2

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;

Al-Baqara 2 : 3

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٥﴾

And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter.

Al-Baqara 2 : 4

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

They are on (true guidance), from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.

Al-Baqara 2 : 5

In these verses the righteous who possess this characteristic of Taqwa are described as:

- 1- They believe in the unseen: God, His Angels, Paradise and Hell
- 2- They establish regular prayers
- 3- They spend and share with others what God provides for them

- 4- They believe in the Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
- 5- They also believe in the Torah and Gospel and in previous messengers sent by God to their people
- 6- They firmly believe that there is a Day of Judgment and that they are accountable to God
- 7- Because of their faith and behavior they are guided by God and they will succeed both in this life and in the Hereafter

Other verses of the Qur'an that describe those who have Taqwa include:

﴿ لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ۗ وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity, to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.

Al-Baqara 2 : 177

In this verse Taqwa is expressed both in our faith as well as in our behavior. Those with Taqwa:

- 1- Believe in God as their Lord and Cherisher
- 2- Believe that they are accountable to God

- 3- Believe in God's Angels
- 4- Believe in God's divine books
- 5- Believe in God's messengers
- 6- They give in charity to their relatives, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, those who ask and those enslaved or are in debt
- 7- They establish regular prayers
- 8- They give the obligatory charity
- 9- They are faithful to their promises and covenants
- 10-They patiently persevere during hard times, during illness and in battle
- 11-They are true to their faith
- 12-They are truly righteous and pious

Another verse that describes the characteristic of those who possess this quality of Taqwa is:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.

Al-Imran 3 : 133

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَبِيمِ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good.

Al-Imran 3 : 134

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ مَثَلًا ذَلِكَ جَهَنَّمُ ۗ وَسَاءَ لِلْمُنْظَرِينَ أَجْرًا ﴾

And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for

forgiveness for their sins; and who can forgive sins except Allah? And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.

Al-Imran 3 : 135

﴿ أُولَئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
وَنِعَمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴾

For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath; an eternal dwelling: how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!

Al-Imran 3 : 136

Additional characteristics of Taqwa in these verses include:

- 1- They spend and share with others, not only when times are good, but also during difficult times
- 2- They control their anger and do not make rash decisions till they have become calm and collected
- 3- They pass over the faults of others and forgive their mistakes
- 4- They repent and seek God's forgiveness when they sin or make a mistake
- 5- They do not persist in their wrong behavior once they realize their mistakes, and they are humble and not arrogant
- 6- Their reward is forgiveness from God, His paradise and His good pleasure, for Allah loves those who do good

How can we achieve this characteristic of Taqwa?

- 1- By increasing our faith and understanding our accountability to God

﴿ يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ أَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴾

O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, Who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;

Al-Baqara 2 : 21

2- Through our rituals of worship like prayer and fasting. The goal of the fast is to achieve Taqwa as we learn self-control and getting closer to God:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿۱۸۳﴾

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint,
Al-Baqara 2 : 183

3- By understanding that faith in God implies being honest, truthful, patient, helping others and reaching out and being foremost in good deeds. In other words, it is confirming our faith in God through our character and behavior. As Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(Have Taqwa (Be conscious of Allah) at all times; if you make a mistake, follow it with a good deed, it will wipe it out; and treat others with good morals and noble character)
Termedhi & Abou Dawood.

We learn from this Hadeeth:

- As human beings we will err and make mistakes. What is important is to learn from these mistakes and not repeat them again.
- We should do good, for our good deeds will count in our favor and it will atone for our sin and mistakes
- Being conscious of Allah at all times will guide our behavior. Those who have Taqwa will be guided because they remember God and are close to Him:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ ﴿۲۰۱﴾

Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! they see (aright)!

Al-Araf 7 : 201

- We interact with others and we live our life serving as examples of good and noble character. We love other human beings and we want to help them and reach out to them. In return we will be trusted and our service will be appreciated

Patience and perseverance

Patient perseverance in Islam is an active process and involves doing our best in obeying Allah, controlling our vain desires and coping with our tests and trials. It is not passive acceptance of fate or giving up. Patience means renewing and increasing our faith in Allah, and trying to change our fate into another fate that Allah may will for us. It also implies not complaining about how much difficulty we are experiencing or saying it is not fair, but accepting our fate and working hard to change it.

How can we acquire patience ?

- 1- Understanding that tests and trials are to be expected
- 2- Seeking help in prayer and in remembering Allah and turning to Him for guidance and support
- 3- Following the example of Allah's prophets who were patient and determined
- 4- Never giving up hope of Allah's mercy
- 5- Understanding the tremendous reward of patience and true faith

Tests and trials are to be expected

Everyone will be tested and tried. Our job is to learn, evolve and become better human beings because of these tests and trials. We do not look at these tests as punishment, or as unfair. Rather, it is an opportunity to increase our faith and demonstrate our commitment:

﴿ أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴾

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe," and that they will not be tested?

Al-Ankabut 29 : 2

﴿ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِينَ ﴿٣﴾ ﴾

We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.

Al-Ankabut 29 : 3

And

﴿ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّٰبِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ أَخْبَارَكُمْ ﴿٣١﴾ ﴾

And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle).

Muhammad 47 : 31

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the proper behavior of a true believer: He is patient and perseveres during during adversity, and he is grateful to Allah during good times:

(I wonder for the affairs of the believer; all his affairs are good for him, and this only occurs to the believer. If he is experiencing ease and happiness, he is grateful to Allah, and this is good for him. And if he is experiencing difficulty he is patient, and this is good for him)

Narrated by Muslim.

Seeking help in prayer and turning to God for guidance and support

When we are facing difficulty and going through hard times it is helpful to turn to God, seek help in prayer and remember that we are accountable for our behavior:

﴿ وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ۗ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ ﴾

Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,

Al-Baqara 2 : 45

﴿ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُنٰقِبُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ ﴾

Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him.

Al-Baqara 2 : 46

We must understand that God controls our life and our fate. If He willed for us to experience a certain difficulty, then we should be patient and persevere and never give up. We should turn to Him seeking comfort in prayer, for it will give us strength and resolve to withstand our difficulty. During prayer we are close to God, we talk to Him and we recite His words. Contrast this behavior with someone who does not believe in God. When faced with difficulty, such a person will question why he is being subjected to this adversity and feels it is unfair. Any faith he may have had will surely evaporate at the first sign of trouble, for such a person does not have true faith nor is his faith grounded in proper understanding. Such a person has no source of strength to fall back on. He easily gives up in despair. The Qur'an will console those who believe and gives them comfort and strength as it did to prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

﴿ وَأَصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۗ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ ﴾

And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots.

An-Nahl 16 : 127

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ ﴾

For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good.

An-Nahl 16 : 128

Following the example of God's prophets who patiently persevered and were determined and committed

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) faced much difficulty and experienced rejection from his own people. The Qur'an came down ordering him to exhibit patience as did previous messengers of firm resolve:

﴿ فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ ۚ كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبُثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّن نَّهَارٍ ۚ بَلَّغْ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴾ (35)

Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) Messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers). On the Day that they see the (Punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day. (Thine but) to proclaim the Message: but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?

Al-Ahqaf 46 : 35

﴿ وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَىٰ مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأَوَدُوا حَتَّىٰ اتَّهَمْتُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِن نَّبَائِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴾ (34)

Rejected were the Messengers before thee: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid did reach them: there is none that can alter the Words (and Decrees) of Allah. Already hast thou received some account of those Messengers.

Al-An'am 6 : 34

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that we are tested according to our degree of faith: the stronger our faith, the more harsh is our test and obviously the greater is our reward:

(Prophets are tested the most, then the most righteous. A person is tested according to his faith. If his faith is strong, his test is more severe. If his faith is weak, his test is less. A person may be tested so often that he is left walking on earth with no sin at all)

Narrated by Termedhi & Ibn Majja

We learn from this saying of the prophet (PBUH):

- We should expect to be tested and tried
- Our test and trials are willed by God according to our faith
- Therefore, we should not complain that what we are going through is unfair or excessive. God knows our

limits and He does not ask us to bear more than we are able to tolerate

- The test and trial is good for us, for it wipes out our sins and increases our reward
- We should always be hopeful of God's mercy and look at the example of God's prophets. They were tested much more severely than we are, and they were closer and more beloved to God. Therefore, being tested and tried is not a form of punishment or is willed for no reason. Rather we should trust God's will and judgment and do our part in patiently persevering.

Never giving up hope of God's mercy

If we understand that nothing happens without the will of God, and that God knows what we are going through, and that God is just and wise, then our faith in God implies that we never give up hope of His mercy and that we confirm our faith in God with patient perseverance. The Qur'an expressed such belief on the tongue of prophet Jacob (Israel) when he advised his children not to despair of Allah's soothing mercy :

﴿ يَبْنِيْ اَذْهَبُوْا فَتَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَ اَخِيْهِ وَلَا تَاْيَسُوْا مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّهٗ لَا يَآيَسُ مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

"O my sons! go ye and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith."

Yusuf 12 : 87

And on the tongue of prophet Abraham :

﴿ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهٖ اِلَّا الضَّالُّوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

He said: "And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?"

Al-Hijr 15 : 56

We learn from these two verses:

- Those who have true faith in God never despair of His soothing mercy
- Giving up hope or becoming despondent is not a characteristic of those who believe. Only those who are misguided would ever despair

The rewards and benefits of patience

- 1- Forgiveness of sin
- 2- Entering paradise
- 3- Receiving God's blessing, guidance and mercy
- 4- Allah supports those who are patient
- 5- The reward of those who patiently persevere is unrivalled
- 6- Being able to withstand our difficulties, tests and trials
- 7- Not despairing of God's mercy
- 8- Not looking for excuses

Forgiveness of sin

If we patiently persevere despite difficulty and adversity our efforts are noted and our struggle and faith is rewarded with forgiveness of our sins. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Whatever afflicts a Muslim of tiredness, pain, anguish, sorrow, harm, sadness, even a thorn that pricks him, till his sins are remitted because of these afflictions)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Entering paradise

Those who have faith and confirm their faith in their good deeds and exhibit patience during difficulty are promised paradise:

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ تَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا

وَلَا يُلَقِّنَهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴾

But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said: "Alas for you! The reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work

righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good)."

Al-Qasas 28 : 80

Those who patiently persevere will be supported by Allah and they will receive His blessings, guidance and mercy

﴿ وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ ﴾

Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

Al-Baqara 2 : 155

﴿ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ ﴾

Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return"

Al-Baqara 2 : 156

﴿ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾ ﴾

They are those on whom (descend) blessings from their Lord, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.

Al-Baqara 2 : 157

The reward of those who patiently persevere is unrivalled

﴿ قُلْ يٰٓعِبَادِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ۗ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ ۗ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿١٥٨﴾ ﴾

Say: "O ye My servants who believe! fear your Lord. Good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is Allah's earth! those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!"

Az-Zumar 39 : 10

Thanking Allah for His blessings and being Grateful To Him

We enjoy many blessings from God. Therefore, it is our duty and obligation to thank God and be grateful to Him. Thanking God is expressed not only in words, but by obeying His orders and by helping God's servants who need our help. We reach out to the needy, poor and helpless extending a helping hand because we acknowledge God's blessings and we want to share His gifts with others. We are humble and grateful. If we are grateful, God promised to give us more. In contrast, if we feel self-sufficient and behave arrogantly and transgress we deny ourselves God's guidance, help and support.

Our obligation to thank God for His blessings

We owe everything to God: We came out of the womb knowing nothing, but God gave us our faculties and the ability to learn:

﴿ وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ
وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that ye may give thanks (to Allah).

An-Nahl 16 : 78

God gave us our intellect and the ability to think, reason and understand

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ ﴾

(Allah) Most Gracious!

Ar-Rahman 55 : 1

﴿ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ ﴾

It is He Who has taught the Qur-an.

Ar-Rahman 55 : 2

﴿ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ﴾

He has created man:
Ar-Rahman 55 : 3

﴿ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴾

He has taught him speech (and Intelligence).
Ar-Rahman 55 : 4

Allah provides for us

﴿ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَلًا طَيِّبًا وَأَشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴾

So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good; and be grateful for the favours of Allah, if it is He Whom ye serve.

An-Nahl 16 : 114

Whatever blessing we have is from Allah

﴿ وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ ﴾

And ye have no good thing but is from Allah; and moreover, when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans;

An-Nahl 16 : 53

Therefore, it is our obligation to thank God and acknowledge His blessings. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught us to say:

(O Allah whatever I find myself enjoying in the morning it is from You alone, You have no partners; all praise and all thanks belong to You)

Narrated by Abou Dawood & Nesa'ee.

The Prophet also taught us to say in our prayer to God :

(O Allah help me to remember You and to thank You and to worship You and to serve You in the best possible way)

Narrated by Abou Dawood, Nesa'ee & Ahmad

Allah appreciates our thanks and promised to give us more if we are grateful

Those who are ungrateful only harm themselves for God does not like ingratitude from His servants. God accepts and appreciates our thanks and rewards us for our service:

﴿ إِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِن تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ
 وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ
 عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ۝ ﴾

If ye reject (Allah), truly Allah has no need of you; but He liketh not ingratitude from His Servants: if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. In the End, to your Lord is your Return, when He will tell you the truth of all that ye did (in this life). For He knoweth well all that is in (men's) hearts.

Az-Zumar 39 : 7

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً
 يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ ۝ ﴾

Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a Commerce that will never fail:

Fatir 35 : 29

﴿ لِيُوفِيَهُمْ أَجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ۝ ﴾

For He will pay them their meed, nay, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (service).

Fatir 35 : 30

And:

﴿ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّرَ رَبُّكُم لِّئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ۖ وَلِئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ۝ ﴾

And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly): "If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed."

Ibrahim 14 : 7

We should thank people and let them know that we are grateful and that we appreciate their service

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught us to thank people, for those who are ungrateful do not acknowledge God's blessings:

(He, who does not thank and is ungrateful to the people, has not thanked God and is ungrateful to Him)

Narrated by Abou Dawood, termedhi & Ahmad

God's prophets serve as examples for us in being grateful to Allah

Prophet Abraham is praised in the Qur'an as a sincere, devoted servant of Allah, and that he was grateful to Allah for His blessings:

﴿ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴾

Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith, and he joined not gods with Allah.

An-Nahl 16 : 120

﴿ شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعَمِهِ ۚ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

He showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, Who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way.

An-Nahl 16 : 121

﴿ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

And We gave him Good in this world, and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the Righteous.

An-Nahl 16 : 122

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was grateful to Allah. He stood up in prayer at night praying and thanking God for His blessings and seeking His forgiveness and guidance. When asked: O messenger of God why do you pray so much knowing that God has already forgiven you, whatever you have done and whatever you may do? He answered: (Should I then not be a grateful servant of Allah!) Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Du'a or calling on Allah

- 1- It is our obligation to call on Allah: Du'a is a form of worship
- 2- Allah hears our Du'a and responds to our cries for help
- 3- Ethics or manners for calling on Allah

- 4- Allah responds to everyone calling on Him, especially to certain types and at certain times
- 5- We should not give up hope or say I called on my Lord but He did not respond to me.

Calling on Allah is a form of worship, therefore we are obligated to call on Him and ask Him

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us that calling on Allah is a form of worship:

(Du'a is worship) Then he recited the Qur'anic verse :

﴿ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ ﴾

And your Lord says: "Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): but those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell, in humiliation!"

Ghafir 40 : 60

Allah hears our Du'a and responds to our prayers

The Qur'an reassures us that God hears our prayers and responds to it:

﴿ وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴾

When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me: that they may walk in the right way.

Al-Baqara 2 : 186

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(God, our Lord, glory be to Him descends to the lower heaven, in the last third of the night and says: "Is there anyone calling on Me and I will

respond to him; is there anyone asking Me, and I will give him; is there anyone seeking My forgiveness and I will forgive him)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

We learn from this Hadeeth:

- God hears our Du'a
- He is ready and willing to respond to us
- He gives us what we ask for, and He forgives our sins
- We should turn to Him and call on Him especially before Dawn when everything is quiet and we are sincere, humble and devoted

The ethics or manner of Du'a

- We call on Allah with humility and devotion
- We call on Allah secretly
- We call on Allah with conviction knowing that He will answer our call in the way that He feels most beneficial for us
- We do not give up if we do not get what we wish for

Calling on God with humility and devotion

﴿ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴾

Call on your Lord with humility and in private: for Allah loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds.

Al-Araf 7 : 55

﴿ وَلَا تَفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.

Al-Araf 7 : 56

﴿ هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

He is the Living (One): there is no god but He: call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!

GHafir 40 : 65

Call on God in your heart secretly

﴿ وَأَذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ

وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴾

And do thou (O reader!) bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings; and be not thou of those who are unheedful.

Al-Araf 7 : 205

Call on God convinced that He will answer your prayer

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(Call on Allah convinced that He will respond to you; and know that Allah does not respond to a heart that is unaware and preoccupied with other things)

Narrated by Termedhi & Hakim

Do not give up or be in haste

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(Every Muslim calling on Allah his Du'a will be answered, either Allah will give him what he asked for, or remove some evil from him, unless he calls for something sinful, or distances himself from his relatives, or is hasty and says: "I called on my Lord, but He did not answer me")

Narrated by Termedhi, Ibn Majja & Tabarani

Allah responds to all Du'a, especially the following persons

- 1- Those fasting till they break their fast
- 2- Those wronged for their Du'a is lifted up and the gates of heaven are opened to it

- 3- A just ruler
- 4- The Du'a of the parent on behalf his children
- 5- The Du'a of A Muslim on behalf another person in his absence
- 6- Du'a on the day of Friday, during Ramadan and waiting for prayer
- 7- Du'a when in prostration phase during prayer
- 8- Du'a before Dawn prayer in the last third of the night

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Three people their Du'a to Allah is not turned down: A just ruler; and the fasting person till he breaks his fast, and the Du'a of the person wronged: for Allah lifts his prayer above the clouds and the gates of heaven are opened and the Lord says: "With My might I will come to your rescue, if not now, then after a while")

Narrated by Termedhi, Ibn Majja & Tabarani

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

(Three prayers are answered, no doubt about that: The prayer of the parent; and the prayer of the person traveling; and the prayer of the person who was wronged)

Narrated by Abou Dawood

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The prayer of a Muslim on behalf his brother, in his absence, will be answered: there is an Angel appointed at his head, every time he asks Allah something good on behalf his brother, the Angel says: "Amen and you too get the same reward")

Narrated by Muslim

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The closest a servant is to his Lord is when he is prostrating, therefore Increase your Du'a at that time)

Narrated by Muslim

Turning to God in repentance seeking His forgiveness and mercy

When we turn to God seeking His forgiveness and mercy we are stressing our utter dependence on Him and admitting our weakness and shortcomings. Repentance means turning to God renewing a pledge to serve Him and live our life as He has commanded and seeking help and guidance. Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) said: (By Allah, I turn to Him in repentance and seek His forgiveness every day seventy times) Narrated by Bokhari.

- We should not despair of God's mercy for He forgives all sins, but we must correct our wrong behavior and follow His orders
- The way to atone for our sins is to do good to wipe or cancel our bad deeds
- We are rewarded for seeking God's forgiveness
- We should follow the example of God's prophets
- We should seek forgiveness, not only for ourselves, but also for our parents and believing men and women

Turn to Allah seeking His forgiveness

﴿ قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Az-Zumar 39 : 53

﴿ وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ﴾

"Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will), before the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped.

Az-Zumar 39 : 54

﴿ وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴾

"And follow the Best of (the courses) revealed to you from your Lord, before the Penalty comes on you - of a sudden while ye perceive not!

- Az-Zumar 39 : 55

And:

﴿ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴾

If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 110

Do good for it will atone for your sins and bad deeds

We must confirm our repentance by doing good. In other words there are steps in atoning for our sins:

- 1- Understanding that we have done wrong and feeling ashamed of our wrong behavior
- 2- Turning to God seeking His forgiveness and making a pledge not to repeat that mistake again
- 3- Doing good to wipe out our bad deeds
- 4- Be ready and willing to receive guidance from God and follow His straight way

﴿ وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى ﴾

"But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right, who, in fine, are ready to receive true guidance."

Ta Ha 20 : 82

﴿ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ

حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴾

Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,

Al-Furqan 25 : 70

We are rewarded for seeking God's forgiveness

The Qur'an teaches us on the tongue of Prophet Hud to seek God's forgiveness, for He then will shower us with rain and sustenance and give us more:

﴿ وَيَقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مَجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ ﴾

"And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him (in repentance): He will send you the skies pouring abundant rain, and add strength: to your strength: so turn ye not back in sin!"

Hud 11 : 52

The same concept is stressed by prophet Nuh

﴿ فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ﴿٧١﴾ ﴾

"Saying, `Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving;

Nuh 71 : 10

﴿ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا ﴿٧١﴾ ﴾

"He will send rain to you in abundance;

NUh 71 : 11

﴿ وَيُضَاعِفْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَبْنَاءِكُمْ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا ﴿٧١﴾ ﴾

"Give you increase in wealth and sons; and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers (of flowing water).

NUh 71 : 12

Follow the example of God's prophets who turned to Him seeking His forgiveness

The Qur'an orders prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to seek God's forgiveness for himself, as well as on behalf the believing men and women:

﴿ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ ﴿٤٧﴾ ﴾

Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for the fault, and for the men and women who believe: for Allah knows how ye move about and how ye dwell in your homes.

Muhammad 47 : 19

We should seek God's forgiveness on behalf our parents and other believing men and women

Prophet Abraham's Du'a to Allah in the Qur'an:

﴿ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ ﴿٤٠﴾ ﴾

"O my Lord! make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring O our Lord! And accept Thou my Prayer.

Ibrahim 14 : 40

﴿ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾ ﴾

"O our Lord! cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness, me, my parents, and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!"

Ibrahim 14 : 41

And on the tongue of prophet Nuh

﴿ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ

الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا ﴿٧١﴾ ﴾

"O my Lord! Forgive me, my parents, all who enter my house in Faith, and (all) believing men and believing women: and to the wrong-doers grant Thou no increase but in Perdition!"

Nuh 71 : 28

Seeking forgiveness in the last third of the night

During this time we are alone, humble and devoted to Allah. We forgo sleep in order to remember God, turn to Him and seek His forgiveness. Our prayer and Du'a to Allah is well received. The Qur'an praises those who pray at night and seek God's forgiveness at Sahar time (Just before dawn):

﴿ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥١﴾ ﴾

As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs,

Adh-Dhareyat 51 : 15

﴿ءَاحْذِينَ مَا ءَاتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾﴾

Taking joy in the things which their Lord gives them, because, before then, they lived a good life.

Adh-Dhareyat 51 : 16

﴿كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾﴾

They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night,

Adh-Dhareyat 51 : 17

﴿وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾﴾

And in the hours of early dawn, they (were found) praying for Forgiveness;

Adh-Dhareyat 51 : 18

Never giving up hope of Allah's mercy

A believer has faith in God. He knows that God is merciful, therefore he never gives up hope of God's mercy. The Qur'an emphasizes this quality of mercy of God to induce us to be merciful as well and to forgive others.

Allah's mercy encompasses everyone, but His special mercy involves those who believe and do good

Allah is merciful. He accepts our repentance and forgives our sins:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ

﴿التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾﴾

Know they not that Allah doth accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity, and that Allah is verily He, the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful?

At-Tawba 9 : 104

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾﴾

He is the One that accepts repentance from His Servants and forgives sins:
and He knows all that ye do.

Ash-Shura 42 : 25

As long as we repent and turn to God, He promised to forgive our sins:

﴿ وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ أَنَّهُ مَن عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴾

When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, say: "Peace be on you; your Lord hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy: verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amended (his conduct), lo! He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

Al-An'am 6 : 54

Allah's special mercy involves those who have faith and do good:

﴿ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

but My Mercy extendeth to all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who do right, and practice regular charity, and those who believe in Our Signs.

Al-Araf 7 : 156

Being truthful and not cheating others

What does truthfulness mean?

To be true to our word and to be true in our behavior is a characteristic of those who believe. Words alone are not enough, we must show in our actions that we truly believe in God and that we obey His orders, and that we strive in His cause:

﴿ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ءَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴾

Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah: such are the sincere ones.

Al-Hujerat 49 : 15

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us about the characteristics of those who are not truthful in order that we may know hypocrisy:

(The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he talks, he lies; and when he promises, he is not faithful to his promises; and when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust) Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

This haddeth therefore tells us that to be truthful and not be considered a hypocrite, we must:

- Tell the truth and not lie when we talk
- Be true and faithful to our promises
- Be true and loyal to our trusts

Truthfulness in our dealings with others

Buying, selling and financial transactions reveal the true nature of people: Are they honest, truthful and fear God? Or are they looking for a quick gain and have no problem in lying or cheating others. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this concept when he said:

(The buyer and seller have a free choice to make until they agree and separate. If they were truthful and honest in what they concluded and did not hide anything, then their commerce will be blessed by Allah for both of them. But if they lied and hid something in their agreement, then they will loose any blessing in their transaction)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

We learn from the prophet's saying:

- We should disclose all relevant information so that the buyer or seller may make his decision based on what is true and accurate, in the same way we wish to be informed

- If we are honest and truthful we gain Allah's pleasure and our affair will be blessed and become successful
- On the other hand, if we lied or cheated others we only deprive ourselves of Allah's blessings, and any temporary gain will be lost

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also stressed that as Muslims we should not hide a defect in the merchandise we are selling, nor cheat others:

(It is not allowed for a Muslim selling something that has a defect in it to hide it, but to inform others about that defect)

Narrated by Bokhari

Those who lie and cheat others will be punished severely. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) related the story of three people who will be punished severely on the Day of Judgment, and Allah will not look at them:

- 1- A person who deprives others of water
- 2- A person who gave his pledge but was only motivated by material gain and when tested broke his promise
- 3- And a person who lied and cheated to sell his merchandise

Then the Prophet (PBUH) recited the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَا خَلْقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا

يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

As for those who sell the faith they owe to Allah and their own plighted word for a small price, they shall have no portion in the Hereafter: nor will Allah (deign to) speak to them or look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He cleanse them (of sin): they shall have a grievous Penalty.

Al-Imran 3 : 77

The rewards of being truthful and honest

- 1- Truthfulness leads to paradise

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told us:

(Indeed truthfulness guides and leads to righteousness, and righteousness guides to paradise. A man keeps on telling the truth until he is known as a

truthful person. Lying indeed leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to Hell Fire. A person keeps on lying till he is considered a liar)
Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

2- Being truthful remits our sins and increases our reward

﴿ وَالَّذِي جَاءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾

And he who brings the Truth and he who confirms (and supports) it, such are the men who do right.

Az-Zumar 39 : 33

﴿ هُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

They shall have all that they wish for, in the presence of their Lord: such is the reward of those who do good:

Az-Zumar 39 : 34

﴿ لِيُكَفِّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

So that Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done.

Az-Zumar 39 : 35

3- Being truthful gets us out of trouble

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) related to us the story of the three men who went into a cave seeking shelter from the rain, but the cave closed on them. They said to each other: “Nothing will save us except the truth. Let everyone relate an incident in which he was truthful“ The first person was honest in his dealings. The second person was honest in taking good care of his parents. The third person feared Allah and did not seduce his cousin though he had the chance. Because of their honesty and truthfulness they were saved. Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim.

We learn:

- Nothing will save us except the truth
- We need to be honest in our dealings with others
- We need to honor our commitment and take good care of our parents
- We need to safeguard our chastity and not take advantage of others when they are weak and vulnerable

Resolve and commitment

As human beings we differ in our resolve and commitment. Some do not have the desire or the will to make a strong commitment and are willing to be followers or sit on the sidelines. Others are willing to put in the effort and make a strong commitment and are leaders. Such desire and high ambition, strong will and resolve comes from strong faith in God and from following the example of prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is the realization that what truly counts is our deeds and what effect we have on our families and our community that drives our actions and renews our commitment.

Those who understand the value of knowledge and are grateful to God for His blessings are willing to learn and to stand up in prayer at night:

﴿ أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَنِتٌ ءَانَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾

Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord, (like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.

Az-Zumar 39 : 9

Such resolve and commitment is also evident in our attempts to control our vain desires and fear our accountability

﴿ فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى ﴿٧٩﴾

Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds,

An-Nazea't 79 : 37

﴿ وَءَاثَرَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٨٠﴾

And had preferred the life of this world,

An-Naze'at 79 : 38

﴿ فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى ﴿٨١﴾

the Abode will be Hell-Fire;

An-Naze'at 79 : 39

﴿ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴾

And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) and had restrained (their) soul from lower Desires,

An-Naze'at 79 : 40

﴿ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴾

Their Abode will be the Garden.

An-Naze'at 79 : 41

Those inviting to Allah will face criticism, rejection and abuse and their message will be distorted. They must patiently persevere and have strong resolve

Muslims in America can relate to this as the message of Islam is distorted in the news media and Muslims are portrayed as backward people who are hateful and bent on violence and destruction. To correct this wrong image and to change the minds of people after it was poisoned is not easy and requires constant vigil and hard work. The Qur'an explains:

﴿ لَتَبْلُوَنَّ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ

قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ

الْأُمُورِ ﴾

Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves; and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.

Al-Imran 3 : 186

Reaching out and helping others and Hastening in all good deeds requires strong faith and determination

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴾

Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 57

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 58

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴾

Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 59

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾

And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 60

﴿ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْحَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴾

It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

Al-Mumenoun 23 : 61

Strength and resolve is the ability to control and restrain our anger

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked his companions: Who do you consider strong? Then he explained: (A strong person, is not he who is physically strong, but is the person who is able to control and restrain his anger)

Narrated by Ahmad, Bokhari & Muslim

The Qur'an praises those righteous servants of Allah who are able to control their anger:

﴿ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ

﴿ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good.

Al-Imran 3 : 134

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ تَحْتَبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ ﴾ (37)

Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, when they are angry even then forgive;
Ash-Shura 42 : 37

Strong will also means that we are not in a hurry to see results

It is the nature of man to be hasty, he wants to see the fruits of his labor. But that may not be God's plan. We must be patient and understand that what is important is that we start and build. Others may come after us, build more and complete what we started. All good work takes time, and we may not see results in our life time. The Qur'an explains:

﴿ خَلِقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَجَلٍ سَأُورِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴾ (21)

Man is a creature of haste: soon (enough) will I show you My Signs; then ye will not ask Me to hasten them!

Al-Anbia'a 21 : 37

﴿ وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ

وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (105)

And say: "Work (righteousness): soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."

At-Tawba 9 : 105

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