

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

Luqmān's Gift: Raising a Soul on Wisdom

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Luqmān's Gift: Raising a Soul on Wisdom

How a humble servant, not a prophet nor a king, left us the perfect roadmap for a grateful heart, a strong family, and a life that walks humbly toward Allah.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Man Allah Immortalised

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me begin with a question that should unsettle us a little. In the entire Qur'an, of all the mighty figures Allah could have chosen to preserve until the Day of Judgement, He chose to record the advice of a man who was *not* a prophet and *not* a king. Think about that. He was, as many of the scholars tell us, a freed slave, dark-skinned, poor, humble, unknown to the powerful people of his time. He owned no palace and commanded no army. And yet Allah loved him so deeply that He captured his words and made them scripture, to be recited on the tongues of the believers in every land, in every century, until the last hour of this world.

What raised this man from obscurity to eternity? Not lineage. Not wealth. Not political power. Allah tells us plainly: it was a single gift. **Wisdom.** And here is what should make every one of us sit up straight this moment: that gift is not locked away in the past. The wisdom Luqmān was given, and the counsel he passed to his son, is laid open before you right now, free of charge, in a few verses you can read in ten minutes. The question is not whether the treasure exists. The question is whether you will pick it up.

So let me invite you to sit with me, not as a scholar lecturing from a distance, but as a fellow traveller who needs this advice as much as you do. Because Luqmān did not speak to strangers. He spoke to his own son, the person he loved most in this world, and he distilled everything a human being needs into a handful of sentences. That is what a father does when he knows his words might be his last: he gives you not everything, but the *essentials*. And that is exactly what we are going to walk through together.

Notice where Allah begins the whole account. Before a single command, before manners or money or marriage, Allah reveals the root from which all of Luqmān's greatness grew.

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وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ وَمَن يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا
يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

*And We certainly gave Luqmān wisdom, saying: **Be grateful to Allah.** And whoever is grateful is grateful only for the good of his own soul. And whoever is ungrateful, then indeed Allah is Free of need, Praiseworthy.*

Surah Luqmān (31:12)

Do you see what Allah named as the very heart of wisdom? Not cleverness. Not eloquence. Not a sharp memory or a successful career. **Gratitude.** Allah defined the wisest heart as the most thankful one. That single line rewrites how we measure a person. The world calls a man wise when he is rich and shrewd. Allah calls him wise when his heart bows in thanks. Hold on to that, because everything else in this lecture flows from it.

THE HEART OF IT ALL

What Gratitude Really Is

Let me ask you honestly: when was the last time you truly thanked Allah, and meant it with your whole heart? Not the automatic *alhamdulillah* we mutter after a sneeze or when someone asks how we are, but the deep, deliberate thankfulness that stops you in your tracks. Because that is what Luqmān was given, and that is what most of us have quietly lost.

The scholars taught that true *shukr*, real gratitude, is not the tongue alone. It has three parts working together. First, the **heart** recognises the blessing and traces it back to the One who gave it, refusing to imagine it came by luck or by your own brilliance. Second, the **tongue** praises Him openly and often. And third, and this is the part we forget, the **limbs** take the very blessing He gave and spend it in His obedience. Let me make it concrete. To thank Allah for your eyes is to lower them from what is forbidden. To thank Him for your wealth is to give some of it away. To thank Him for your health is to

carry it into the masjid and into service. A gratitude that never travels from the tongue to the hands is only half a gratitude.

And Allah attached to genuine thankfulness one of the most staggering promises in the whole Qur'an. He said that if you are grateful, He will *increase* you. Sit with that. Gratitude is not merely a duty you owe; it is the very engine by which your blessings grow. The person who thanks Allah for a little finds it becoming much. The person who complains about much finds it slipping through his fingers. This is not superstition, my dear brother; it is the law Allah wrote into the fabric of reality.

Now look honestly at the age we live in, because it is engineered to make you ungrateful. Our entire economy runs on convincing you that what you have is never enough. The newer phone. The bigger house. The holiday the stranger on your screen is enjoying while you sit in traffic. We scroll through a curated highlight reel of other people's blessings until our own real blessings look grey and small by comparison. You have clean water pouring from your tap, a thing kings once could not guarantee, and you feel poor because someone online has a nicer kitchen. This is the disease Luqmān's wisdom cures.

Because here is the truth about the two hearts. The ungrateful heart is restless and resentful no matter how much it holds; it is a bucket with a hole in the bottom, and no amount of blessing ever fills it. The grateful heart is at peace even with little; it treasures the breath in its lungs and the roof over its head and finds that enough is a feast. Which heart do you carry, my dear sister? And which one do you want to carry when you meet Allah? That is why Allah began the whole passage here. Without gratitude, none of the rest of the wisdom can take root.

THE FOUNDATION

The First and Greatest Lesson

Now watch how a wise father begins. Luqmān did not open with career advice, or how to handle money, or how to choose a spouse. He began with the one thing that will save his son when everything else is stripped away, and he wrapped it in tenderness, calling him *yā bunayya*, O my dear little son. Feel the love in that word before you hear the command.

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ
 إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

*And remember when Luqmān said to his son, while instructing him: O my dear son, **do not associate anything with Allah.** Indeed, associating partners with Him is a tremendous wrong.*

Surah Luqmān (31:13)

The greatest gift a parent can ever give a child is not a trust fund, not a prestigious education, not a secured future. It is **tawhīd**, the pure worship of Allah alone. Because all the other gifts can be lost. The money can vanish in a market crash. The degree can become worthless. The health can fail. But a heart that knows and worships its Lord alone carries a wealth that no thief can steal and no disaster can touch. That is why Luqmān planted it first.

And notice how Luqmān named shirk. He called it *ẓulm ‘azīm*, a tremendous wrong, a monstrous injustice. Now, we usually picture injustice as a crime against another person: stealing his money, harming his body, taking his rights. But Luqmān teaches his son that the worst injustice in all of existence is to take the one right that belongs to Allah alone, the right to be worshipped, and hand it to something that never created you, never sustained you, and can never save you. It wrongs the truth. It wrongs your own soul, which was fashioned precisely to know its Maker. It wrongs the very purpose you were placed on this earth to fulfil.

And do not think shirk is only bowing to an idol of stone. Ask yourself, my dear brother: what do you truly worship? What is it that you would sacrifice your prayer for, sacrifice your honesty for, sacrifice the pleasure of Allah for? Is it wealth? Is it status? Is it the approval of people whose opinions will not add a single day to your life? A heart can bow to many idols without ever kneeling before one. So the first thing the wise parent, and the wise soul, plants is this: Allah alone, with no partner, no rival, no competitor for the throne of the heart. Every other branch of goodness grows from that one root. Cut the root, and the whole tree withers.

Honour the Ones Who Carried You

And now something remarkable happens. In the very middle of Luqmān's advice, Allah Himself steps in and adds His own command, joining the right of the parents so tightly to His own right that the two are mentioned almost in a single breath.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ
وَفَصَّالَهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

*And We have enjoined upon the human being concerning his parents. His mother carried him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. **Be grateful to Me and to your parents.** To Me is the final return.*

Surah Luqmān (31:14)

Be grateful to Me and to your parents. Allah placed thankfulness to your parents right beside thankfulness to Himself. And then He drew a special spotlight onto the mother: *weakness upon weakness*. Think about what that phrase carries. Nine months of growing heavier and more exhausted. The agony of birth, which the Qur'an elsewhere describes as her being brought to the edge. Then two full years of nursing, of broken sleep, of waking at every cry while you slept soundly. Of cleaning you when you could not clean yourself, feeding you when you could not feed yourself, and loving you fiercely before you could even smile back at her. This is why, when a man came to the Prophet ﷺ, the answer came three times before the father was ever mentioned.

جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَنْ
 أَحَقُّ النَّاسِ بِحُسْنِ صَحَابَتِي قَالَ أُمُّكَ قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ
 ثُمَّ أُمُّكَ قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ ثُمَّ أُمُّكَ قَالَ ثُمَّ مَنْ قَالَ ثُمَّ
 أَبُوكَ

*A man came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said: O Messenger of Allah, who among people most deserves my good companionship? He said: **Your mother**. He said: Then who? He said: Your mother. He said: Then who? He said: Your mother. He said: Then who? He said: Your father.*

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 5971 and Sahih Muslim: 2548 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaquun Alayh (agreed upon)

Three times the mother, my dear brother, and then the father. Let that reorder your priorities. And the Prophet ﷺ taught us that the pleasure of Allah is found in the pleasure of the parent, and the anger of Allah in the anger of the parent. So let me ask you the hard question. How many of us were once carried, fed, and watched over when we could do nothing at all for ourselves, and now, when our parents are old and their knees fail and they need us the way we once needed them, we are too busy? Too short-tempered? Too quick to raise our voice at the very people Allah commanded us never even to sigh at?

Consider how seriously the best of the believers took this. There was, in the generation after the Companions, a man named Uways al-Qaranī. He was unknown, plain, poor, the kind of man no one would look at twice in a crowd. He spent himself entirely on the service of his elderly mother. And yet the Prophet ﷺ named this hidden man before that generation was even born, and instructed ‘Umar and ‘Alī, may Allah be pleased with them, that if they ever met him they should ask *him* to seek forgiveness for *them*, because his du‘ā was answered with Allah. What lifted this invisible servant above the great and famous? His *birr*, his devotion to his mother. His prayers pierced the heavens because he had honoured the woman who carried him.

And there is the account of a man who carried his mother on his back through the entire Hajj, circling the Ka'bah with her upon his shoulders, and then asked Ibn 'Umar: have I repaid her now? And Ibn 'Umar answered that he had not repaid even *one* of the pangs of her labour. My dear sister, we will never fully repay them. That is the point. But Allah opened a door of immense reward in the mere *trying*, and slammed a door of ruin upon the one who turns away. So before you leave the page today, resolve it: call the parent you have been meaning to call. Serve the mother whose body now fails her. Lower your wing of humility to the father who once lowered his whole life for you. This is gratitude in action, and Allah tied it directly to His own right.

WHERE LOVE MEETS FAITH

Honour Them, but Obey Allah First

But the wisdom of the Qur'an is never blind, and it is never unbalanced. So immediately Allah draws the one line that love for parents must never cross, so that honouring them never becomes disobedience to Him.

وَإِنْ جَاهِدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ
فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet accompany them in this world with kindness.

Surah Luqmān (31:15)

Look at the perfect balance of our religion. If a parent commands their child toward shirk, or toward any clear disobedience to Allah, the child must not obey, because there is no obedience to any created being in disobedience to the Creator. That principle is fixed and it does not bend. And yet, in the very same breath, Allah commands that even then, even while refusing the sinful command, the child must remain kind: *ṣāhibhumā fī ad-dunyā ma'rūfā*, accompany them in this world with good conduct. You may refuse the command, but you may not become cold, harsh, or cruel.

This is a lifeline for every Muslim with a non-Muslim parent, or a parent who pulls them toward the ḥarām. Hold your faith without one inch of compromise, and hold your manners without one moment of failure. Disagree, but never dishonour. You can say no to the sin while still kissing the hand, still visiting the home, still speaking with gentleness. That is the maturity Allah demands of the believer: firm in the matters of faith, tender in the matters of conduct. Anyone can be firm and cruel. Anyone can be kind and spineless. It takes wisdom, real Luqmānian wisdom, to be firm and kind at once.

THE GOD WHO SEES

The Mustard Seed in the Rock

Then Luqmān turns his son's gaze upward, to the perfect and total knowledge of Allah, planting in his heart a watchfulness that will guard him for the rest of his life, especially in the moments when no human eye is upon him.

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي
صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ

*O my dear son, indeed if a deed should be the weight of a mustard seed, and it were within a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. **Indeed, Allah is Most Subtle, All-Aware.***

Surah Luqmān (31:16)

Picture it. A single seed of mustard, one of the smallest things the human eye can even detect. Now bury it inside a solid rock. Then take that rock and lose it somewhere in the endless vastness of the heavens, or hide it in the deepest crushing dark of the earth. And still, Allah says, He will bring it forth on the Day of Judgement and place it on the scale. Sit with what that does to a heart, my dear brother. It means that no good deed you ever did, however small, however unnoticed and unthanked by people, is ever lost with

Allah. The kindness no one saw. The prayer you dragged yourself to when your body begged for sleep. The coin you slipped into a hand without anyone knowing. All of it is safe, recorded, and waiting for you.

And it means the reverse too. No sin you committed in secret, in the locked room, behind the screen, in the moment you were absolutely certain no one on earth would ever know, was ever actually hidden. This is the verse that builds *taqwā*, the consciousness of a God who sees the atom in the darkness. The true believer behaves the same when he is alone as when he is watched, because he has understood a shattering truth: he is never, not for a single instant, actually alone.

THE SELF BEHIND THE SCREEN

The Person No One Sees

Let me dwell on that mustard seed a moment longer, because it strikes directly at a wound peculiar to our generation. We now live enormous portions of our lives in secret: behind screens, behind passwords, in private browsing tabs and locked phones and closed doors. And a whole generation has quietly come to believe that the person no one sees is the person who does not really count. We build a polished, filtered self for the public, and we keep a hidden self for the dark, and we soothe ourselves with the lie that the hidden one does not matter, because no one knows.

Luqmān's words to his son shatter that lie completely. There is no rock thick enough. No corner of the heavens or the earth remote enough. And, I will say it plainly, no privacy setting strong enough, to hide a single mustard seed of a deed from Allah, who is *Laṭīf*, so subtle and fine that He perceives the most concealed and delicate of things, and *Khabīr*, so utterly aware that nothing whatsoever escapes Him. Your hidden self is not hidden. It is fully lit before the only One whose gaze ultimately matters.

So the believer who truly digests this verse does something powerful: he closes the gap between his public self and his private self, until the two slowly become one single person. He is the same man on his phone at midnight as he is standing in the front row at Fajr. He does not perform a piety he abandons the moment the door clicks shut, because he knows the door shuts out people but never, ever shuts out Allah.

And here, my dear sister, is the mercy folded inside the warning. Just as no secret sin is too small for Allah to catch, no secret *good* is too small for Him to treasure. The quiet charity no one knew you gave. The tear you shed alone in *sujūd* when your heart was breaking and no one was there to comfort you. The

temptation you turned and walked away from when you could have had it, and no human being on earth would ever have known. All of it is gathered up by the One who misses nothing, and laid gently on your scale on the Day it will matter more than anything ever mattered. The mustard seed cuts both ways. And for the one who fears Allah in private, it is the sweetest promise of all.

FROM HEART TO HANDS

Stand for Prayer, Stand for Truth

Having grounded his son in the worship of Allah, in the rights of parents, and in the watchfulness of the All-Seeing, Luqmān now turns to action. And in a single dense verse he hands his son an entire programme of worship and courage.

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزَمِ الْأُمُورِ

*O my dear son, establish the prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. **Indeed, that is among the matters of firm resolve.***

Surah Luqmān (31:17)

Four commands, and notice how they build one upon the other like bricks. First: **establish the prayer**. Not just perform it, but establish it, make it firm and central and alive. The prayer is the private cable connecting the servant to his Lord, and a person who cannot keep his own connection to Allah has nothing real to offer anyone else. You cannot pour from an empty cup. So Luqmān starts inside: fix your own bond with Allah first.

Then, from that inner strength, he turns his son outward: **enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong**. Because the believer is not a hermit hoarding his own salvation; he carries a duty toward the reform of the community around him. But look at the order. He did not tell his son to go fix the whole world and then, if there is time left over, sort out his own prayer. He said fix your prayer first, *then* turn outward. We have too many today who are loud in correcting everyone else and utterly silent in their

own worship, eager to police the faith of the whole world except their own, and the result is harshness without any light. The believer who has built his own prayer brings to this work a gentleness and a credibility that the empty critic can never fake.

And then, knowing exactly what happens to anyone who stands for the truth, Luqmān adds the fourth command: **be patient over what befalls you.** Patience comes right after enjoining good, because the two always travel together. You cannot call people to the truth without absorbing the mockery, the pushback, the loneliness, and sometimes the outright hostility that follows. And Allah crowns this whole programme by calling it *min ‘azm al-umūr*, among the matters of firm resolve, the serious, weighty deeds that separate the committed believer from the one merely drifting along with the current.

And understand, my dear brother, enjoining good is not always a public sermon or a confrontation. In your own home it is a kind word that gently steers your child back onto the path. Among your friends it is the quiet courage not to laugh along when the backbiting starts. In the wider world it is speaking up for what is right when silence would be so much easier and so much safer. This is the steady, humble reform that Luqmān taught: rooted in your own worship, carried out with patience, and completely free of arrogance.

THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF

Walk Humbly Among People

And now, notice how Luqmān chooses to end his advice. Not with some towering act of worship, but with something we constantly forget is even part of the religion: the way we carry ourselves among other human beings. Our humility. Our walk. The very tone of our voice.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ
 وَاعْضِضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

*And do not turn your cheek away from people in scorn, nor walk through the earth with arrogance. Indeed, Allah does not love anyone who is self-deluded and boastful. And be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice. **Indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the braying of donkeys.***

Surah Luqmān (31:18-19)

Do not turn your cheek away from people, that is, do not look down your nose at them or twist your face aside as if they are beneath you. Do not strut through the earth swollen with self-importance, because Allah does not love the one filled with himself and boastful. Walk with a balanced, dignified pace, neither dragging nor showing off. And lower your voice, because the harsh, needlessly raised voice that dominates a room is, Allah says here, like the ugliest sound in all creation: the braying of a donkey. What a striking, almost startling image to leave your beloved son with. But it lands, doesn't it?

Because arrogance, my dear brother, is the disease that destroyed the very first creature to rebel. Iblīs did not disbelieve out of ignorance; he knew Allah and he saw Paradise. He fell because of one thing: pride. He refused to bow because he thought himself better. And the Prophet ﷺ warned us of this exact poison in the most terrifying terms.

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ

No one will enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of an atom of arrogance.

Source: Sahih Muslim: 91 · Authenticity: Sahih

An atom. The tiniest measurable speck of pride, and the gates of Paradise swing shut. So Luqmān ends exactly where the deadliest spiritual diseases actually live: in the heart. He teaches his son that all the worship in the world is undone if it sits comfortably beside arrogance. The believer walks gently, speaks softly, and meets people with a face that does not despise them, because he knows a simple truth about himself: he is dust, and whatever good he holds came as a gift from Allah, not as a trophy he earned by his own greatness. Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is remembering, every single moment, where you came from and to whom you belong.

WHO IS RAISING THEM?

Planting Faith in the Next Generation

There is one dimension of this entire passage that should weigh heavily on every parent reading these words, and it is this: the whole thing is a father teaching his child. Luqmān did not assume his son would simply absorb faith from the air around him, or catch it like a cold from the culture. No. He sat with him. He addressed him tenderly, *yā bunayya*, again and again. And he deliberately, patiently planted, one seed at a time, the things that matter most: the worship of Allah alone, the watchfulness of the heart, the prayer, the courage, the humility. He did the work.

This is the duty Allah has laid upon us toward the children He entrusted to us, and our age has made it harder than any generation before us. Because we are raising children in a world that pours a competing message into their eyes every single waking hour. A world that trains them, through the glowing screen in their hand, to worship themselves, to chase the dunyā, to measure their entire worth by what they own and how many strangers approve of how they appear. And here is the sobering reality, my dear sister: if you do not deliberately plant faith in your child, the world will very gladly plant something else in the empty soil. The soil never stays empty.

So let me ask you the question that matters most: who is actually raising your children? Is it you, sitting with them the way Luqmān sat with his son, teaching them to know their Lord and to love their prayer, modelling before their eyes the gratitude and humility you want them to carry? Or have you handed them, hour after unwatched hour, to a glowing rectangle and a stranger's voice, and simply hoped they would somehow turn out righteous by accident? Faith is not caught by accident. It is planted by hand.

The supplication Allah teaches us, *make righteous for me my offspring*, is not answered by wishing. It is answered by effort: by the bedtime story that is a story of the Prophets, by the prayer prayed together as a family, by the parent who chooses to be the first and best teacher his child will ever have. And here is the

beautiful secret: your children are the deeds that keep working for you long after your own hands have gone still. The Prophet ﷺ told us that a righteous child who prays for his parent is among the very few things whose reward keeps reaching a person even in the grave. So plant well, my dear brother. Plant with your own two hands. And you will harvest long after you have left this world behind.

THE PRAYER OF THE WISE

What the Grateful Heart Asks For

Now let me show you something breathtaking that ties this whole lecture together. Allah teaches the mature believer, the one who reaches around the age of forty and looks back honestly over his life, a particular supplication. And it gathers the entire wisdom of Luqmān into one sentence.

رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى
وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي

*My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do righteousness of which You approve, and **make righteous for me my offspring.***

Surah al-Aḥqāf (46:15)

Look at everything this single duʿā asks for. It asks to be *enabled* to thank Allah, both for the favours upon oneself and upon one's parents, joining the two exactly as Luqmān's surah joined them. It asks to do righteous deeds that Allah will actually accept, not just deeds that look good to people. And it asks Allah to make one's children righteous, because gratitude is never truly complete until it is passed down to the next generation. Gratitude, parents, righteous action, righteous children: the whole curriculum of Luqmān, folded into one prayer.

And here is the astonishing part. This is the very same supplication Allah records on the lips of the Prophet Sulaymān, peace be upon him. Sulaymān, who was given a kingdom the like of which no one after him would ever possess. The wind itself under his command. The language of the birds. Armies of

jinn and men marching at his word. And what did he pray for at the peak of that unimaginable power? Not more. Not a larger empire or a longer reign. He prayed: *my Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favour*. The poorest believer struggling to pay rent, and the mightiest king who ever lived, both begging Allah for the exact same thing: a grateful heart. That, my dear brother, tells you precisely where the real treasure lies. It was never in the kingdom.

And there is something deeply moving in the moment Sulaymān made that prayer. The Qur'an tells us he had halted his entire marching army, in all its awesome might, because he heard the tiny voice of a single ant warning the other ants to hurry into their homes lest Sulaymān's soldiers crush them without even noticing. A king at the absolute summit of human power stopped everything to listen to an ant. And it was the sheer smallness of that moment, the reminder of how much Allah had given him and how little he had done to deserve any of it, that moved him to smile and to beg, not for more, but simply to be made grateful for what he already held. How completely opposite to the way power usually works on a human heart, swelling it with pride until it tramples everything beneath it. Sulaymān's true greatness was never his kingdom; it was that his kingdom never made him forget for one instant that every atom of it was a gift, and that the only fitting response to a gift is thanks. If the man Allah gave the most still begged only to be made grateful, what possible excuse do the rest of us have for our ingratitude over so much less?

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

Four Questions and the Heaviest Scale

So the advice of Luqmān leaves every one of us holding four honest questions to weigh our lives against. Do not rush past them. Answer them quietly in your own heart. First: am I truly grateful to Allah, not only with my tongue when I say alhamdulillah, but in my *actions*, in how I actually spend the health, the wealth, the time, and the faith He handed me? Second: do I honour my parents with real service and real gentleness, while they are alive and through constant du'ā after they are gone, or have I let busyness and impatience quietly steal that enormous reward from me? Third: am I actively striving to raise righteous children, planting tawhīd and prayer and good character in them as Luqmān planted them in his son, or have I outsourced their souls to screens and strangers? And fourth: am I living humbly, walking gently and speaking softly, or has a quiet, comfortable arrogance crept unnoticed into my heart?

These are the questions of a wise soul. And notice that the thread running through all four, from the very first verse to the last, is gratitude expressed through good character. And the Prophet ﷺ told us precisely which of all our qualities will weigh the very heaviest on the Day we are judged.

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلُ فِي مِيزَانِ الْمُؤْمِنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ
حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ

There is nothing heavier in the scale of the believer on the Day of Resurrection than good character.

Source: Sunan Abi Dawud: 4799 and Jami at-Tirmidhi: 2002 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Nothing heavier on the scale than good character. And good character is precisely what Luqmān spent his final and most tender words teaching his son: humility, gentle speech, kindness to parents, dignity among people. So let us not close this lesson and simply walk away unchanged. Let us leave resolved to actually live the wisdom of Luqmān: to be grateful in our actions and not just our words, to honour the parents Allah placed over us before it is too late, to raise the next generation upon faith with our own hands, and to walk this earth softly and humbly. This is the path of gratitude, righteousness, and humility. It is a continuous journey, my dear brother, my dear sister, and it ends only when we finally return to the One who gave us everything.

☰ Your Action Plan: Living Luqmān's Wisdom

Don't just read — choose what you will act on this week.

1 Turn gratitude into action, not just words

Pick one blessing you take for granted, your eyes, your wealth, your health, and use it in obedience today: lower your gaze, give a little charity, or walk to the masjid on foot to thank Allah with the very gift He gave.

TODAY

Make it last: once you begin today, keep it every day after — until it becomes a permanent habit for life.

2 Repay the ones who carried you

Call or visit the parent you have neglected. Serve them with your hands and lower your voice with them, and if they have passed, make sincere du'a for their forgiveness. Do it before another day slips by.

TODAY

Make it last: once you begin today, keep it every day after — until it becomes a permanent habit for life.

3 Close the gap between your public and private self

Remember the mustard seed: examine one hidden habit no one sees, and change it so that the person you are alone at midnight matches the person you are in the front row at Fajr.

THIS WEEK

Make it last: once this first week is done, don't stop — carry it on as a lifelong habit.

4 Plant faith in the next generation with your own hands

Take back one hour you would have handed to a screen and spend it teaching your child: pray together, tell them a story of the Prophets, or simply speak to them tenderly the way Luqmān spoke to his son.

DAILY

Make it last: keep it daily until it becomes second nature — a habit for the rest of your life.

🚩 The 7-Day Gratitude Challenge

For seven days, end each night by naming out loud three specific blessings from that day and thanking Allah for each one, then choose one blessing to spend in His obedience the next morning. Watch how a heart trained to see the favour of Allah in the breath it takes and the water it drinks grows calmer, richer, and more content. Do not let it end on the seventh night; let it become the way you live, until saying alhamdulillah with a full heart is simply who you are. And once these days are done, don't let it stop — let it become a lasting habit of the heart, carried for the rest of your life.

Make it stick – and make it last

- ✓ **Write it down.** Put your chosen action on a sticky note on your mirror, desk, or fridge – somewhere you cannot miss it.
- ✓ **Print this plan** and tick each action off as you do it.
- ✓ **Set a daily reminder** on your phone or calendar so it never slips your mind.
- ✓ **Keep a one-line journal** each night – did I do it today? how did it go? – and watch your streak grow.

Don't aim for one good day or week – aim to keep it for life. A habit only counts once it outlives the challenge.