

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

For His Face Alone: The Secret That Weighs Your Deeds

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

For His Face Alone: The Secret That Weighs Your Deeds

Before a single deed of yours is weighed, one quiet question decides its fate: for whom did you do it?

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Question That Weighs Everything

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me ask you something honestly, and I want you to sit with it for a moment before you rush past it. On the Day of Judgement, before your deed is placed on the scale, before its size is measured or its difficulty is counted, before the crowd around it is remembered or the hardship behind it is recognised, one quiet question will be asked of that deed. Not *how big was it*? Not *how hard was it*? Not *how many people saw it*? The question is simpler and far more piercing than all of that. The question is: **for whom was this done?**

Imagine two people standing in the very same row of prayer. Their shoulders touch. They bow at the same moment, they prostrate at the same moment, they whisper the same words. From the outside, no camera and no human eye could tell them apart. And yet one of them rises from that prayer with a mountain of light and reward, and the other rises with nothing at all. How? Because the One who judges does not look at the shape of the deed. He looks at the heart that carried it. Two coins of charity given side by side, two days of fasting kept together, two words of truth spoken in the same room, can be worlds apart in the sight of Allah, because the deed is only a body, and the intention behind it is the soul.

We live in an age that is obsessed with how things appear. We have learned to love the photograph of the good deed more than the good deed itself. We reach for our phones before we reach for sincerity. And so this lecture is a return, my dear reader, a return to the one foundation the world has nearly forgotten, the foundation that decides whether your lifetime of worship arrives on the scale full of light or arrives scattered like dust. It is the foundation of doing everything, absolutely everything, for the sake of Allah alone.

You Were Made for One Thing

Allah did not create you to drift through your days collecting praise, gathering possessions, and hoping to be liked. He told you plainly, in a single verse, why you draw breath at all. He stripped life down to its one purpose and left no room for confusion.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

*And I did not create the jinn and mankind **except to worship Me.***

Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:56)

Reflect on how total this is. Everything else in your life, the earning and the eating, the marrying and the building, the studying and the sleeping, was placed here to serve this one purpose, that you would worship Allah and turn your face to Him. Your whole existence is meant to point in one direction, like a compass needle that cannot rest until it finds north. But here is the part we so easily forget: worship is not accepted simply because your limbs performed it. A prayer prayed for the wrong reason is not automatically a prayer. Charity given for the wrong reason is not automatically charity.

Worship is accepted when it is offered to Allah *alone*, untouched by the desire for the eyes of people and the applause of tongues. This pure offering has a beautiful name in our religion. We call it **ikhlas**, sincerity. It is the soul that gives life to every act of worship. And a deed without it is a body without a soul, perhaps beautiful to look at, dressed well, perfumed and admired, but dead. My dear brother, my dear sister, would you build a lifetime of worship only to discover it was lifeless the whole way?

THE FIRST HADITH OF ISLAM

Actions Are Judged by Intentions

Our religion is built upon this principle so firmly that the scholars placed the hadith which contains it at the very front of their books. They considered it a third of all knowledge. When Imam al-Bukhari began his great collection, of all the thousands of narrations he could have opened with, he chose this one.

Listen to the words that Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, carried to us from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى، فَمَنْ
كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ،
وَمَنْ كَانَ هِجْرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا
فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ

*Actions are but by intentions, and every person will have only what he intended. So whoever migrated for Allah and His Messenger, his migration is for Allah and His Messenger. And whoever migrated to gain something of this world or to marry a woman, **his migration is for that which he migrated to.***

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 1 and Sahih Muslim: 1907 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Look carefully at the example the Prophet ﷺ chose, because he could have chosen anything. Two people leave Makkah. They make the same long and dangerous journey to Madinah. The same road under the same burning sun, the same fear of pursuers, the same aching legs, the same destination at the end. From the outside, their migration is identical, indistinguishable. And yet one of them arrives with a migration recorded forever for Allah and His Messenger, while the other arrives with nothing of the sort, because his heart was quietly set on a marriage or a profit waiting for him at the other end.

The deed was one single deed. The intention split it into two completely different deeds. Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, gave us an image I want you to remember for the rest of your life. He said that deeds without sincerity are like a traveller who fills his bag with sand. It weighs him down the whole journey, it exhausts his back, and at the end it brings him nothing at all. Do you want to carry sand all the way to your grave?

But there is a mercy hidden in this hadith too, a mercy that should make you smile. The intention is what transforms the most ordinary acts of your life into worship that draws you nearer to Allah. The merchant who earns to feed his family for the sake of Allah is worshipping while he counts his money. The parent who cooks a meal with the intention to keep the family strong for Allah is worshipping over the stove. The same acts, done for the wrong reason, are merely a person tiring himself out. So the question follows you into your kitchen and your car and your workplace: for whom?

THE COMMAND TO EVERY NATION

Make Your Religion Purely His

Do not imagine, my dear reader, that sincerity is a luxury reserved for the elite, the saints, the scholars in their retreats. Allah did not leave it as a virtue for the few. He made it the very thing He commanded of every human being in every age. When He summarised the entire message of every Prophet who ever walked the earth, He gathered it into a single verse.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ
وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ

*And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, **making the religion sincerely for Him**, inclining to truth, and to establish the prayer and give the zakat. And that is the upright religion.*

Surah Al-Bayyinah (98:5)

Making the religion sincerely for Him. This was the heart of what was asked of every nation before you, and it is the heart of what is asked of you today, in your language, in your century, with your phone in your pocket. And notice something remarkable: the believer is not taught to make only his worship sincere. He is taught to hand over his entire life and even his death. Allah commanded His Messenger ﷺ to proclaim a statement that I want you to make your own, to say quietly to yourself on your way to work tomorrow morning.

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say, indeed my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. He has no partner. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims.

Surah Al-An'am (6:162-163)

Do you feel the reach of this declaration? It is not only my prayer that is for Allah. It is my living and my dying, the whole span of my existence from the very first breath to the very last. As-Sa'di, may Allah have mercy on him, explained that this verse gathers every single one of a servant's affairs and devotes them to Allah alone, so that the person becomes someone whose worship, whose habits, and whose final moment are all turned in one direction. This, my dear brother and sister, is what it truly means to live for the sake of Allah. It is not a warm feeling that visits you in Ramadan and packs its bags in Shawwal. It is the permanent orientation of a whole life, so that whether you are praying or working or resting or wiping a child's tears, your face is turned toward your Lord.

WHERE THE RECKONING HAPPENS

He Does Not Look at Your Surface

Because the deed is judged by what lies behind it, the Prophet ﷺ told us exactly where the real reckoning takes place, and it is not in the places we spend our lives polishing for show. Let these words rearrange your priorities.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ
إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

*Indeed, Allah does not look at your outward forms or your wealth, but **He looks at your hearts and your deeds.***

Source: Sahih Muslim: 2564 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Allah does not look at your form, at the impressive appearance you construct, the polished image, the carefully arranged reputation you protect so anxiously. He looks straight past all of it, into the heart that beats beneath the surface. And I want you to feel that this is, at once, the most comforting truth and the most frightening truth in your entire religion.

It is the most comforting because it means the small servant whom no one on earth notices, the poor woman who gives a single date with a trembling, sincere heart, the tired labourer who whispers a prayer in an empty room where no one will ever know he prayed, may stand higher before Allah than the famous and the wealthy and the celebrated. Your obscurity is no obstacle to Allah. If your heart is right, your smallest deed can outshine the grandest.

And it is the most frightening because it means the grand deed performed before a thousand people may be utterly empty, weightless, a hollow shell, if the heart behind it was reaching for that thousand and not for the Creator. This is why the early Muslims laboured over their hearts far more than over their limbs. They understood a truth we keep forgetting: a small deed with a sincere heart outweighs a huge deed with a corrupted one. A person could carry his good works, sweating under their weight, all the way to the scales, only to watch them scatter like ash because they were never truly for Allah.

THE PUREST HEARTS

The Prophet Who Worshipped Out of Love

If we want to see what a life lived purely for the sake of Allah actually looks like, we look first, always, to the Messenger ﷺ. Now think about this carefully. He had every reason the world recognises to relax.

Allah had already forgiven him his past and future. Allah had granted him the very highest station a human being could reach. If anyone had earned the right to ease, it was him. And yet he stood in prayer through the long night until his blessed feet would swell and crack from the standing.

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, watched this and could not understand it. She asked him, gently, why he burdened himself so severely when Allah had already honoured him and forgiven him. His answer revealed the purest heart that ever beat in a human chest.

أَفَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

Should I not be a grateful servant?

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 4837 and Sahih Muslim: 2819 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Sit with the purity of that answer, my dear brother and sister. He did not worship to gain something he lacked. He did not worship to be seen. He did not worship to be praised. He worshipped because his Lord deserved to be worshipped and thanked, and for no other reason under the sky. This is the very summit of sincerity, that the servant gives Allah his worship simply because Allah is worthy of it, the way the most beautiful gift is the one given with no thought of anything in return.

And his Companions drank from that same spring. When Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, poured out his wealth for the sake of Allah, he held nothing back, nothing. And when he was asked, almost in alarm, what on earth he had left for his own family, he did not boast of his sacrifice, he did not list what he had given up. He gathered his entire trust and his entire wealth into a single, breathtaking sentence: *I have left for them Allah and His Messenger*. That is a heart that has stopped calculating. That is a heart that has handed everything over and discovered, in the surrender itself, a wealth no money could ever buy. The Companions were not stronger than us in their bodies. They were stronger than us in their hearts, and that, my dear reader, is the entire secret of their greatness.

THE MOST FRIGHTENING HADITH

The Three Who Were Cast Into the Fire First

Of all the warnings the Prophet ﷺ gave us about insincerity, none is heavier, none sits on the chest quite like this one. He related it from his Lord, describing the first three people to be judged on the Day of

Resurrection. I need you to listen carefully, because these were not lazy people. These were not the abandoners of prayer or the drinkers of wine. These three performed the greatest deeds a human being can perform. Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, carried it to us.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ النَّاسِ يُقْضَىٰ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ اسْتُشْهِدَ،
فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَّفَهُ نِعَمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا، قَالَ: فَمَا عَمِلْتُ فِيهَا؟
قَالَ: قَاتَلْتُ فِيكَ حَتَّى اسْتُشْهِدْتُ، قَالَ: كَذَبْتَ،
وَلَكِنَّكَ قَاتَلْتَ لِأَنْ يُقَالَ جَرِيءٌ، فَقَدْ قِيلَ، ثُمَّ أُمِرَ
بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ حَتَّى أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ

*Indeed, the first of people to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who was martyred. He will be brought forth, and Allah will make known to him His blessings, and he will recognise them. Allah will say, what did you do with them? He will say, I fought for Your cause until I was martyred. Allah will say, **you have lied. Rather, you fought so that it would be said, he is bold, and so it was said.** Then it will be ordered that he be dragged upon his face until he is cast into the Fire.*

Source: Sahih Muslim: 1905 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Then the Prophet ﷺ continued to the second man, one who had learned sacred knowledge, taught it to others, and recited the Qur'an beautifully. He too will be reminded of Allah's favours, and he will say that he studied and taught and recited for the sake of Allah. And Allah will say to him, you have lied. Rather, you studied so that it would be said, he is a scholar, and you recited so that it would be said, he is a reciter, and so it was said. He too will be dragged upon his face into the Fire.

Then comes the third, a man whom Allah had made rich, given every kind of wealth, and who spent it generously in every good cause. He will say that he left no path in which Allah loves money to be spent except that he spent in it for His sake. And Allah will say, you have lied. Rather, you did it so that it would be said, he is generous, and so it was said. And he too is cast into the Fire.

My dear brother, my dear sister, sit with the terror of this for a moment. These three did not abandon prayer. They did not steal, they did not oppress the weak. They performed the three deeds this Ummah praises most highly of all: martyrdom, sacred knowledge, and charity. The scholar had the Qur'an in his chest. The rich man fed the hungry. The soldier gave his very life on the battlefield. And all three were the first to be dragged into the Fire, because somewhere along the way, quietly, almost invisibly, the deed had turned its face away from Allah and toward the praise of people. If insincerity can ruin martyrdom, if it can ruin the Qur'an, if it can ruin charity that fed the starving, then what on earth must we fear for our own small deeds? This is precisely why the greatest of the Companions feared hypocrisy in their own hearts. The danger was never in the size of the deed. The danger is always in the secret turning of the heart.

THE HIDDEN SHIRK

The Sin the Prophet Feared Most for You

This silent corruption of the deed has a name, and the Prophet ﷺ feared it for this Ummah more than he feared the great and obvious sins. It is called **riya**, doing acts of worship in order to be seen and praised by people. And he gave it a name that should make every heart tremble. He called it the lesser shirk.

إِنَّ أَخَوْفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرَ، قَالُوا:
وَمَا الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: الرِّيَاءُ

*Indeed, the thing I fear most for you is the lesser shirk. They said, and what is the lesser shirk, O Messenger of Allah? He said, **showing off in worship**.*

Source: Musnad Ahmad: 23630 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Why did he call it shirk, the associating of partners with Allah? Because the one who shows off has quietly taken the eyes of people as a partner in a worship that belongs to Allah alone. He has invited a second audience into a private meeting with his Lord. Yes, it is called the *lesser* shirk because it does not expel a person from Islam the way the worship of idols does. But do not let that word lesser lull you to sleep, because the Prophet ﷺ feared it precisely for his best Companions, the ones we would never suspect. And he warned that Allah will deal with the one who shows off in a fitting, humbling way, exposing on the Day of Judgement the very thing he tried to hide for the eyes of people.

مَنْ سَمِعَ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، وَمَنْ يُرَائِي يُرَائِي اللَّهُ بِهِ

Whoever does a deed to be heard of, Allah will expose his true intention before the creation, and whoever shows off, Allah will show his reality.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6499 and Sahih Muslim: 2986 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Now let me be honest with you about our own time, because in our age the danger of *riya* has grown enormous, larger than in any generation before us. Never in human history has it been so effortless to display your good deeds to so many people so instantly. A man gives charity, and the temptation whispers, *photograph it*. A woman recites the Qur'an beautifully, and the temptation whispers, *record it*. A person fasts, prays at night, helps a struggling neighbour, and a small persistent voice says, *just let people know, just a little*.

Now, let me be balanced and fair, because our religion is balanced. There is nothing wrong with a believer being seen doing good when the heart is sincere and the aim is to encourage others to follow. Allah Himself praised those who give both openly and secretly. The danger is not the seeing. The danger is the deed done *for* the eyes, the worship whose true audience has silently become the crowd instead of the Creator. So examine your heart before the deed, during the deed, and after it. Even Imam Ahmad, one of the giants of this religion, struggled with this his entire life, because the soul loves to be praised, it is hungry for it. And the cure is not to give up, it is to keep returning the deed to Allah, again and again and again, until He alone is the One you wish to please.

The Narrow Path Between Two Pits

The early Muslims understood that sincerity is a narrow path walked between two pits, one on either side, and it is dangerously easy to fall into either. One of the most precise descriptions of this ever spoken came from al-Fudayl ibn Iyad, may Allah have mercy on him, a worshipper so devoted that even the rulers of his time revered him. He weighed the matter with a jeweller's care.

He said: *Abandoning a deed for the sake of people is riya, and doing a deed for the sake of people is shirk, and sincerity is that Allah saves you from both of them.* Consider how exact this is, my dear reader, because it catches us where we least expect it. If you leave a good deed because you are afraid people will see you and call you a show-off, you have *still* let people decide your worship. You have still made them the reference point. That, said al-Fudayl, is riya of another kind. And if you perform the deed because people are watching, that is the very shirk we have been warned against. So where is safety?

True sincerity is to act as though people did not exist at all. Not performing for them, not abstaining for them, but living entirely and only before Allah, as if the whole world had emptied and it was just you and your Lord. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, may Allah have mercy on him, made a beautiful observation about this. He said that the one who truly knows Allah and truly knows people will realise that people are utterly powerless to benefit him or harm him in what actually matters, and so his heart is set free, gloriously free, to worship for his Lord alone. That freedom is the sweetest fruit of sincerity. A person who has it no longer lives as a prisoner of what others think of him, anxiously checking his reflection in every pair of eyes. He becomes a servant of the only One whose opinion will matter on the Day we are all raised.

Whatever You Leave, He Replaces With Better

Now, before I ask you to change anything, I want to remove a fear from your heart, the fear that makes sincerity feel so costly. Deep down, when we give up something for Allah, a corner of the heart whispers that we are losing, that we are being cheated, that sincerity is expensive. The Prophet ﷺ closed that door of fear forever with a promise I want you to memorise and lean on for the rest of your life.

إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَدَعَ شَيْئًا اتَّقَاءَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَّا أُعْطَاكَ اللَّهُ
خَيْرًا مِنْهُ

Indeed, you will never leave anything for the sake of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, except that Allah will give you something better than it.

Source: Musnad Ahmad: 23074 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Carry this promise in your heart everywhere you go. The lower income you accept to escape the unlawful, the friendship you let go because it dragged you away from Allah, the comfortable warm bed you abandon to answer the call of Fajr, the sharp word you swallow purely to please your Lord: none of it, not one crumb of it, is ever lost. Allah does not take from a sincere servant without giving him something better in return, whether in this world, or in a peace of heart that money cannot buy, or stored and multiplied for him on the Day when he will need it most desperately of all. The one who understands this truly gives for Allah with an open hand and a calm face, because he knows with certainty that he is not losing a single thing. He is trading the lesser for the greater with the most generous of all who give.

SINCERITY IN EVERY CORNER

How to Actually Live This, Today

So how do we bring this down from the sky and into our homes, our jobs, our phones? Let me walk you through the fields where sincerity is won or lost. The first field is your worship itself. My dear reader, build deeds between you and Allah that no human being will ever see. These hidden deeds are the truest proof of where your heart actually stands, because there is no one left to impress. A prayer in the depth of the night when the house is asleep. A charity slipped quietly into a hand and never mentioned again. A tear shed alone over your own sins. Guard a portion of your worship that has no audience but Allah, and it will become an anchor for your sincerity. The Prophet ﷺ named, among the seven whom Allah will shade on the Day of no shade, these very people.

وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَأَخْفَاهَا حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ شِمَالُهُ مَا
تَنْفِقُ يَمِينُهُ، وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ خَالِيًا فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ

*And a man who gives charity and conceals it so that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given, and a man who **remembers Allah in private and his eyes overflow with tears.***

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 660 and Sahih Muslim: 1031 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

The second field is your heart's compass, your love and your hatred, your giving and your withholding. Be honest: how much of our anger is really for ourselves, for our bruised pride, dressed up as anger for the sake of God? How much of our friendship is quietly for our own benefit? The Prophet ﷺ taught that the one who orders these feelings around Allah has completed his very faith.

مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِلَّهِ، وَأَبْغَضَ لِلَّهِ، وَأَعْطَى لِلَّهِ، وَمَنَعَ لِلَّهِ،
فَقَدْ اسْتَكْمَلَ الْإِيمَانَ

*Whoever loves for the sake of Allah, hates for the sake of Allah, gives for the sake of Allah, and withholds for the sake of Allah **has perfected his faith.***

Source: Sunan Abi Dawud: 4681 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

This same reordering transforms your daily work, the place where most of your waking hours are actually spent. The believer who goes to his job, his shop, his laptop, with the intention of earning lawfully to support his family, to keep himself from begging, and to have something to give in charity, has turned eight hours of labour into eight hours of worship. Think of that. The teacher who teaches sincerely, the doctor who heals sincerely, the driver and the trader and the cleaner who fear Allah in their

smallest dealings, all of them are walking the path of Allah while the world assumes they are merely earning a living. But beware the opposite, my dear brother, that your trade becomes a performance for status, your generosity a display for reputation, and your honesty a mask you wear only while customers are watching. Sincerity in the marketplace is to be the same person when the camera is off as when it is on, to give full and honest measure when no inspector will ever check, remembering that the One who sees the secret of the scale is the One before whom your final account is settled.

The third field is the home, and this is where sincerity is hardest, precisely because it is the least seen and the most endlessly repeated. There are no crowds at home, no applause, only the same faces and the same tasks, day after day. The father who provides. The mother who wakes through the night for a crying infant. The spouse who stays patient at the end of an exhausting day. My dear reader, when these ordinary, invisible, unglamorous acts are done with the intention to please Allah, they become a continuous, flowing worship that fills the scales quietly for years. The Prophet ﷺ taught that even the morsel of food a man lifts to his wife's mouth is a charity he is rewarded for. So do not let the smallness or the endless repetition fool you. Renew the intention over the dishes, over the school run, over the bills, and a lifetime of caring for your family becomes a lifetime of worship recorded in your book.

The fourth field is patience, because Allah tied even our endurance of hardship directly to Him. When the test comes, and it will come, the betrayal, the loss, the slow grinding difficulty that has no obvious end, the sincere believer does not merely grit his teeth and survive. He offers his patience up to Allah as an act of worship in its own right, and Allah Himself describes this in His Book.

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وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ
فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ

*And be patient, and **your patience is only through Allah**. And do not grieve over them, and do not be in distress over what they plot.*

Surah An-Nahl (16:127)

When the World Enters the Heart

Now let me name the one disease that, more than any other, pulls the heart away from sincerity, because if you can treat the root, the branches wither. The Prophet ﷺ foretold a time when the Muslims would be enormous in number yet weak and scattered, swept along helplessly like foam riding the surface of a flood. When he was asked the cause of this terrible weakness, he gave a single, piercing word.

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَكَرَاهِيَةُ الْمَوْتِ

It is love of this world and dislike of death.

Source: Sunan Abi Dawud: 4297 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Love of this world is the very soil in which insincerity grows. It cannot grow anywhere else. The one who deep down loves the praise, the wealth, and the comforts of this life will inevitably, almost automatically, begin to perform his religion for the sake of those things, because that is where his heart already lives. But notice, and this is important, the cure is not to abandon the world, to throw away your money and your job and your responsibilities. The cure is to put the world in its proper place, to hold it in your hand and never let it into your heart. The Prophet ﷺ gave us the perfect image for this: be in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveller passing along a road. Think about a traveller. He uses the road, he takes what he needs from it, he rests at the stations, but his eyes never leave the destination. He does not stop to build a palace on the highway. Live like that, my dear brother and sister, and sincerity becomes almost natural, effortless, because a heart that is genuinely travelling to Allah does not waste its time performing for the strangers it passes on the way.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

Between Hope and Fear

Let no one, no one, leave this lecture in despair, thinking that because riya is so subtle and so hidden, no deed of theirs could possibly be safe, and so why bother trying. My dear reader, hear this clearly: the very fact that you fear insincerity is itself a sign of your sincerity. The pure hypocrite never loses a moment of sleep worrying about hypocrisy. Your worry is a mercy, a sign that your heart is alive and watching itself.

The mere arrival of a thought of showing off does not ruin your deed, as long as you fight it and turn back to Allah. The Companions themselves felt these whispers and struggled against them, and so will you until the day you die. So do not, whatever you do, abandon a good deed just because Shaytan whispers that you are showing off, because that is a clever trap designed to rob you of the deed entirely and leave you with nothing. Instead, perform the deed, fight the whisper, and hand the whole thing to Allah. And to the one reading this who feels they have lived for show for many years, whose whole record feels contaminated: the door is wide open, right now. Renew your intention today, repair what you can, and resolve to live the rest of your life for the One who sees what no eye can ever see. Walk toward your Lord on the two wings of hope in His vast mercy and fear of His displeasure, and ask Him, the only One who can set a heart straight, to make you sincere. And then, my dear brother, my dear sister, do not just close this and carry on as before. Turn the reminder into a plan.

☰ Your Action Plan: For His Face Alone

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

1 Build one hidden deed

Choose one act of worship this week that no human being will ever know about: two extra rak'ahs before you sleep, a charity you tell no one, or a private du'a with tears. Let it be yours and Allah's alone.

DAILY

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

2 Renew the intention out loud

Before you start work, before you cook, before you drive the kids, whisper: 'O Allah, this is for You.' Turn the ordinary hours of your day into worship by naming who they are for.

DAILY

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

3 Catch and correct the whisper

When you notice the urge to photograph, mention, or hint at a good deed, pause, fight it, and offer the deed silently back to Allah. Do not abandon the deed — purify it.

THIS WEEK

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

4 Do a heart audit

Once this week, sit quietly and ask honestly of your biggest deeds: for whom? Write down anything you find turning toward people, and make a firm intention to redirect it to Allah.

THIS WEEK

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

🚩 The 7-Day Sincerity Challenge

For seven days, keep one act of worship completely secret between you and Allah, and each morning renew the words 'my living and my dying are for Allah' before you leave the house. Watch how it quietly changes the weight of your whole day. The goal is not seven days of pretending — it is to plant a hidden root that keeps you sincere for the rest of your life, so that long after this week ends, there is always something in your record that belongs to Allah alone.



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.