

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

Returning to Allah: Off the Cliff's Edge

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Returning to Allah: Off the Cliff's Edge

The believer is not the one who never slips, but the one who always finds his way back.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Slip After the Season

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me start with something you have probably lived through yourself. You come out of an intense season of worship. Maybe it was Ramadan, and you tasted nights when your heart felt light and close and clean. Maybe it was Hajj, when you stood on 'Arafah and wept like you had never wept before. Maybe it was a quiet 'Umrah where, for once, the noise of your life went silent and it was just you and your Lord. And then the season ends. You return to normal life. And slowly, without meaning to, you begin to slip. A prayer here, a habit there. And then one morning you wake up and feel the weight of it, the guilt sitting on your chest, and a quiet voice inside you asks: *what happened to me?*

If that is you, I want you to hear me clearly: **you are not alone.** This is the experience of the overwhelming majority of us. In fact, there is a strange rule to it. The more intense the worship, the more intense the guilt that follows the fall, because the height you climbed makes the drop feel further. But I want to put a question before you this morning that the Qur'an itself raises, and it may change how you understand the whole thing. When you slipped, did you fall back on your heels, or did you fall flat on your face? These are not the same. And the difference between them is the entire difference between a believer who recovers and a person who loses everything.

This lecture is about that difference. It is about the kind of worshipper who stands on the edge of a cliff, and the kind who stands on solid ground. It is about loving the Giver and not just His gifts. And it is about the one lesson that, if you take nothing else home today, will carry you for the rest of your life: **the point was never that you never fall; the point is that you always come back.**

THE IMAGE THE QUR'AN PAINTS

The One Who Worships on an Edge

Allah describes a certain kind of person with an image so vivid you can almost see it. Picture a man standing on the very brink of a cliff. He is not sitting on stable ground in the middle of the field. He is right at the edge, one hand shading his eyes, watching. As long as pleasant things come his way, he is

content to stay. But the moment the wind of a trial blows, he loses his footing and he is gone, tumbling over the side. Listen to how the Qur'an says it.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ ۖ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ
أَطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ ۚ
خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ۚ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

And among the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If good befalls him, he is content with it; but if a trial strikes him, he turns on his face. He has lost this world and the Hereafter. That is the clear loss.

Surah Al-Hajj (22:11)

‘alā ḥarf, on an edge. On a boundary. On the razor's edge of a decision that has never really been settled. And I want you to sit with what Allah says this person loses. Not just the Hereafter. Not just this world. He loses **both**. He gets neither, because his heart was never truly anchored to either one. He was hovering, evaluating, waiting to see if the deal was worth it. And Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, cut to the very heart of this condition in a single word.

يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى شَكٍّ

He worships Allah upon doubt, not upon certainty.

Source: Reported from Ibn ‘Abbas in Tafsir al-Tabari and Sahih al-Bukhari: 4742 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Doubt. That is the ground he is standing on. His worship is not built on certainty about who Allah is; it is built on a running calculation about what Allah is doing for him lately. And here is what I need you to understand, because this is not some ancient problem belonging to a people long dead. This is a disease that crosses every culture, every class, and every generation, including our own. It looks at Allah and at Islam the way a person once looked at an idol.

A DANGEROUS LOGIC

Do Not Treat Your Lord Like an Idol

Think about the logic of idol worship for a moment, because when you see it clearly it is almost embarrassing in its simplicity. A man carves an idol. As long as the idol seems to give him what he wants, good harvests, healthy children, safe travels, he keeps it. He worships it, he offers to it, he loves it. But the moment his crops fail, the moment his luck turns, what does he do? He abandons that idol and carves another one. The relationship was never about the idol at all. It was about him and his wishlist, with the idol serving as a vending machine.

The Bedouins in the time of the Prophet ﷺ, some of them, approached Islam in exactly this way. They would embrace it, then step back and watch their lives like a man watching a stock ticker. If their wealth grew, their family flourished, their health improved, they said, *what a wonderful religion, what a Lord worth worshipping, I will stay*. But if things turned down, if drought came or a child fell sick, they said, *clearly this is a bad religion*, and they walked away as easily as they walked in. And Allah condemned this attitude severely, not because it was a Bedouin problem, but because He knew it would be a human problem in every age.

So let me ask you gently, my brother, my sister. When your finances are healthy and your family is well and your body is strong, you say, *alhamdulillah, Islam is beautiful, I am so grateful*. But what happens the year the diagnosis comes? The year the marriage cracks? The year the money runs out? Does your heart quietly begin to back away from the very edge of the cliff? Because if it does, then what you have is not *ibādah*, not worship, not submission. It is **assessment**. You have put Allah Himself under constant evaluation, and a heart that is always evaluating its Lord has never once moved past the edge.

Between two extremes the people have always stood. On one end was Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, whose certainty was so complete that whatever the Prophet ﷺ said, he accepted it at once as truth. When the Prophet ﷺ told him of the night journey to Jerusalem and beyond, Abu Bakr did not pause. He said, *if he said it, then it is true*. That is why he earned the name as-Siddiq, the truthful,

the certain. On the other end stood the chief of the hypocrites, who played at faith, mouthing the words while his heart stayed cold, staying only as long as it served him. Between those two poles stretches a long line, and every single one of us stands somewhere upon it. The question this morning is not whether your tongue said the shahadah. The question is where your heart is sitting on that line: near the mountain-steady certainty of as-Siddiq, or out on the trembling edge where the very first hardship can tip you over.

TWO KINDS OF FALLING

Falling Back, or Falling on Your Face

Now here is where the Qur'an becomes astonishingly precise, and where I want to hand you some real hope. There are two ways to fall, and they are not the same. Allah spoke to the believers at the most disorienting moment imaginable, the death of the Prophet ﷺ himself, the moment the earth felt like it had shifted under their feet. And He used a very deliberate image.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ
مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ
عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

*Muhammad is but a Messenger. Messengers have passed away before him. So if he dies or is killed, **will you turn back on your heels?** And whoever turns back on his heels will never harm Allah in the least, and Allah will reward the grateful.*

Surah Al 'Imran (3:144)

The scholars of the Arabic language noticed something profound in the phrase *turning back on the heels*. To fall back on your heels is not to lose your sight of the truth. Picture it physically. When you step backward, you can still see everything in front of you. You are fully aware, fully oriented, you know

exactly what you are looking at. You have simply frozen. You are holding back out of a kind of paralysis, asking yourself whether it is still worth the investment, whether this path will still deliver what you hoped for. After the Prophet ﷺ passed, some among the community wondered whether they should keep giving in charity, keep praying behind a lesser leader, keep holding to every part of the practice now that the beloved teacher was gone. That is falling back on the heels. It is dangerous, yes, but crucially, it is not yet total ruin. The eyes are still open. The truth is still in view.

Falling on the face is something else entirely. The one who falls flat on his face is completely disoriented, blinded, face in the dirt, unable to see the very truth he once stood upon. And he ends by losing everything of this world and the next, exactly as the earlier verse described. So here is the mercy hidden in the language, and I want you to hold onto it. **When you slip, do not let a stumble of the heels become a fall onto the face.** As long as you can still see the truth, you can still turn back to it. The one who has merely stepped backward is one decision away from stepping forward again. Do not let Shaytan convince you that a stumble is a total collapse.

THE SUBTLE DISEASE

Do You Love the Blessing, or the Giver?

Now let me take you to the very root of worship on the edge, because it is subtle and it hides in language that even sounds pious. The Prophet ﷺ taught us, in an authentic narration, that we should love Allah for the blessings He gives us. And that is true and beautiful. But there is a fine, almost invisible line that many of us cross without ever noticing: the line between loving Allah *for* His blessings, and loving Allah *only to the extent* that He keeps the blessings coming.

So let me ask you the most honest question of this lecture. Do you love the blessings, or do you love the One who gives the blessings? Sit with it. Because if your love stops at the gift, then your relationship with Allah is entirely transactional, and there is nothing transformational in it. You are saying, in effect: *give me this and I am content; withhold it and I withdraw*. That is not the love of a servant for his Lord. That is the arrangement of a customer with a shop.

So how does a person actually move beyond the edge? By coming to know the Giver, not merely the gift. By learning who Allah truly is, His beautiful names and His majestic attributes, and building a relationship with Him that does not depend on the blessings at all. He is *al-Karim*, the Generous. He is *al-Wahhab*, the Bestower. He is *al-Mannan*, the Ever-Gracious. And the blessings He sends were always

meant to be a means of loving Him, a doorway to Him, not a substitute for Him. Allah Himself pointed us straight to this door.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ
يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

And to Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call upon Him by them. And leave those who deviate concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they used to do.

Surah Al-A'raf (7:180)

When you truly know Him this way, your very words change. You no longer say, *O Allah, give me this and then I am good*. You begin to say, *O Allah, I am good regardless. And when the blessings come, they only remind me of how You have always been good to me*. Do you feel the difference? That is a love that does not collapse when the gift is delayed, because it was never anchored in the gift to begin with. It was anchored in Him.

Watch how subtly this shows itself right after a season like Ramadan. A person says, *I made such sincere du'a in the last ten nights, I wept on Laylat al-Qadr, now let me watch the coming year and see whether these du'as come true*. And when something goes his way, he lights up: *I love Allah, this is wonderful, Islam is beautiful, the du'a I made came to pass*. On the surface it looks harmless. It even sounds grateful. But underneath it is the same quiet evaluation running in the background: *I am pleased so long as the results arrive*. Those blessings were meant to lead you to love al-Karim and al-Wahhab; they were never meant to become the measuring stick by which you decide whether He is worthy of your worship.

And understand this carefully, because it will save you from despair: this is not always a question of belief and disbelief. Very often it is a question of *rida*, of whether you are pleased or displeased with your Lord. A person can remain a firm believer and still slip into a quiet displeasure, loving Allah warmly when the blessings flow and growing cold toward Him when they are withheld. So do a little self-audit. If you notice that your contentment with Allah rises and falls with your comfort, your sleep, your bank balance,

then your heart is still viewing Him through the prism of His gifts. The way out is always the same: come to know Him beyond what He gives, until you are pleased with Him no matter what, and His gifts, when they arrive, simply remind you of how good He has always been to you.

WHEN THE WISDOM IS HIDDEN

The Test That Disorients

Now look again at that first verse, at the second half of it, when the *fitnah* strikes the one on the edge. Notice that Allah did not say *if hardship befalls him*. He deliberately chose the word *fitnah*, a test that disorients, a trial designed to shake your clarity to its foundations, a moment in which a person could lose his footing entirely. And here many of us, even sincere believers, make a quieter mistake.

We tell ourselves, without ever saying it out loud, that we can bear a test only to the extent that we can understand it. So when hardship comes, we go hunting for the silver lining. We look for the wisdom, the lesson, the light at the end of the tunnel. And as long as we can frame the trial inside our own reasoning, *ah, I see, this happened so that this good could come*, we hold on. But the moment the wisdom is hidden from us, the moment there is no visible lesson and no comforting explanation, we pull back and say, *I do not understand this*, and we begin to slide off the cliff all over again. My beloved, to worship Allah only when His decree makes sense to you is still to worship Him on an edge.

So how do we get past it? By coming to know Allah as *al-Hakim*, the All-Wise, whose every decree is soaked in a wisdom you may never fully see. As *al-'Alim*, the All-Knowing, who knows what you do not know about your own life. As *al-Latif*, the Subtle and Kind, who arranges even your pain with a gentleness you will one day recognise. And then by trusting Him more than you trust yourself. This does not mean you will feel no pain. Of course you will feel it. It means that in the middle of the pain you still say, from the depths of your heart, *I trust Him more than I trust my own understanding*.

Let me give you an exercise, and I warn you it is a difficult one, but it is deeply rewarding after the difficulty. Think of the three worst things that could happen to you in this life. The nightmares that keep you awake at night. Now ask yourself, honestly, without flinching: if they came to pass, would they change your relationship with Allah? Would they change your worship, your submission to His decree, your love for Him? If the answer is yes, then you have found your work. There is a relationship to build, a relationship that stands independent of the test, one that no calamity can knock over. And in doing this work, never forget where the heart itself actually resides.

إِنَّ قُلُوبَ بَنِي آدَمَ كُلَّهَا بَيْنَ إِصْبَعَيْنِ مِنْ أَصَابِعِ
الرَّحْمَنِ كَقَلْبٍ وَاحِدٍ يُصْرِفُهُ حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ

*Indeed, the hearts of the children of Adam are all between two of the fingers of the Most Merciful, as a single heart; **He turns it however He wills.***

Source: Sahih Muslim: 2654 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

If the heart itself is in the hand of Allah, turned as He wills, then the safest place for a believer is not in his own white-knuckled grip on his faith. It is in constantly, humbly asking the One who turns the hearts to keep his turned toward Him. This is why the steadiness we are chasing is never something you manufacture inside yourself by sheer willpower. It is something you **request**, again and again, from the Lord of the heart. The steadiest believers you know are not the ones with the strongest wills. They are the ones who beg Allah most often to hold their hearts steady.

THE THIRD PRISM

Submission Beyond What You Understand

Let me widen this out, because most of us interact with our religion through three prisms, and we have now touched two of them. The first prism is the blessings we hope to receive. The second is the trials we hope to avoid. And the third is this: the commands we are told to follow. And many people, sincere people, will accept a command of Islam only to the extent that they can rationalise it. As long as it makes sense to them, they submit. The moment it does not, they quietly hold back.

Now let me be balanced here, because this matters. Allah absolutely invites us to use our minds. Many people come to faith through reason, through pondering the proofs of *tawhid*, through witnessing the miracle of a Qur'an preserved word for word across fourteen centuries. The intellect is a gift and a doorway. But there is a world of difference between using your mind to *arrive* at faith, and making your ongoing submission *conditional* on always understanding. Allah gently corrected the Bedouins who had claimed faith too quickly and too shallowly.

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا
 أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ
 وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
 رَحِيمٌ

*The Bedouins say: We have believed. Say: You have not yet believed, but say instead: We have submitted, **for faith has not yet entered your hearts.***

Surah Al-Hujurat (49:14)

When you say *aslamtu*, I submit, you are saying something magnificent. You are saying: I accept the command of Allah because it is the command of Allah, not because it has first passed the test of my own logic. If you only obey the parts of your religion that you can neatly reduce to one plus two plus three, then your relationship with Allah is still perched on that same trembling edge, waiting to topple the day a command lands that your mind cannot immediately compute. True submission means trusting the wisdom of the One who commands, even, and especially, when that wisdom is beyond your reach. It is the trust of a patient who lets the surgeon operate, not because he understands surgery, but because he trusts the surgeon.

YOU WERE NEVER PROMISED EASE

Tested, Not Abandoned

And let no one among us imagine that faith was ever meant to be lived without trial, as if being a good believer buys you a smooth ride. Allah stated it as plainly as it can be stated.

ج
الْم أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يَتْرُكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا
يُفْتَنُونَ

Alif Lam Mim. Do the people think that they will be left to say: We believe, and they will not be tested?

Surah Al-'Ankabut (29:1-2)

Read that and let it reset your expectations forever. The test is not a sign that Allah has turned away from you. Very often it is the very means by which He is drawing you near. Trial is among the fastest roads to closeness with Allah, and among the most powerful forges for a du'a and a trust that no longer depends on your circumstances. The person who has never been shaken has a faith that has never been tested, and a faith never tested is a faith of unknown strength. And for the moment when the weight feels genuinely unbearable, when you feel you cannot take one more day, hold this promise against your chest.

ج
لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا
مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. *It will have the good it earned, and it will bear the evil it earned.*

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:286)

Every single trial that has ever reached you was measured, weighed, and matched against a strength that Allah knew you possessed. You may feel with total conviction that you cannot carry it. But He knew that you could, and your very endurance, the fact that you are still standing, still praying, still reading these

words, is the living proof. So pay attention not to what is happening to everyone else, but to yourself, and consider this carefully: what you have been reading as Allah pushing you to your limit may in truth be Allah pulling you closer to Himself.

And we have to be careful here, because we constantly read the surface of our lives and judge wrongly. We assume that ease always means Allah is pleased and difficulty always means He is angry. But that is simply not how the Qur'an describes life. Sometimes ease is itself the test, a soft trial that quietly makes you careless. And sometimes difficulty is elevation, a hard mercy that raises your rank. Sometimes the very thing you were begging for was the thing that would have pulled you away, and the thing you dreaded was the thing that brought you home. When you look back honestly across your own life, you begin to see the pattern: how certain painful chapters drove you to your prayer mat, and how certain comfortable ones made you forget you even had one. So do not rush to judge your story by how it feels in the moment. Not every high is a blessing, and not every low is a punishment. Some lows are a cleansing. Some highs are a slow forgetting.

THE NATURE OF THE HEART

Faith Rises and Falls Like Waves

One of the first things a believer notices about himself, if he is paying attention, is how quickly his heart changes. One week you feel strong and connected, your prayers taste sweet, your du'a flows. The next week you feel distant and dry, as if a curtain has dropped. And here is the thing: it almost never happens through one dramatic event. It happens through small, unnoticed shifts. A missed prayer here. A delayed du'a there. A distraction that slowly, quietly becomes normal. And then one day you look up and wonder how on earth you drifted so far from where you were.

Most people, the moment they feel that distance, panic. They conclude that something is permanently broken inside them, that they are just not cut out for this. But my dear brother, my dear sister, that is not how faith works, and believing that lie is half the battle lost. Faith rises and falls like waves, not like a straight line drawn on a page. Some days you are near, some days you are struggling, and Allah knew this about you before He ever created you. He did not design you to be an angel. The point was never to be perfect. **The point is to return.** The point is not that you never fall, but that you always come back, and that return, repeated across a lifetime, defines you far more than any single fall ever could.

The great danger is that people judge themselves far too harshly. They think that because they slipped once, they are finished, disqualified, done. And Shaytan absolutely loves that thought, because it does his

work for him: it makes a person give up entirely rather than simply try again. But the door was never actually closed. It only feels closed when your perspective narrows down to your worst moment. The mature believer learns a rare and precious balance: to take his sin seriously without taking it as a final verdict against his future.

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يَرَىٰ ذُنُوبَهُ كَأَنَّهُ قَاعٌ تَحْتَ جَبَلٍ يَخَافُ أَنْ
يَقَعَ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّ الْفَاجِرَ يَرَىٰ ذُنُوبَهُ كَذُبَابٍ مَرَّ عَلَىٰ أَنْفِهِ

The believer sees his sins as though he were sitting beneath a mountain, fearing it may fall upon him, while the wicked one sees his sins as a fly that merely passed over his nose.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6308 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Notice the balance the believer holds. He takes the mountain seriously; he does not shrug at his sin like a fly. But he also does not let the mountain crush him into despair, because he knows the One beneath whose shade he sits is the Most Merciful. Seriousness about the sin, hope in the Forgiver. Hold both, and you will never be broken by either.

HOW YOU DRIFT

The Way Distance Creeps In

It is worth understanding *how* the distance actually creeps in, because it rarely announces itself with a trumpet. Distraction does not usually arrive dressed as something obviously sinful, waving a flag that says *this will ruin you*. It arrives dressed as comfort. As entertainment. As *just a little break, I have earned it*. And slowly that little break stretches out and becomes your default state, until your heart has grown comfortable with everything except reflection. And then worship starts to feel heavy instead of natural. Not because worship changed. Worship is exactly what it always was. **You changed.** That is why returning always takes real effort. You are not simply performing a few actions again; you are gently undoing habits that quietly moved in and took up residence while you were not paying attention.

And here is a mercy hidden in the mechanics of it. Sometimes Allah removes something you were comfortable with precisely in order to wake you up. Not as a punishment, but as a reset. Suddenly you lose the sweetness you used to feel in prayer. You sense a hollow emptiness where there used to be a warm connection, and you cannot understand why. But that very confusion, that ache, can be part of the calling back. Because when everything is easy, we stop paying attention. And when it becomes a little difficult, we suddenly start to notice again, straining our ears for Him. Even the discomfort is guiding you somewhere. The believer learns to read these dry seasons not as abandonment, but as an invitation, an outstretched hand, asking him to return before the distance grows any wider.

THE MARK OF THE BELIEVER

The Best of Those Who Err

So what should a person actually do the moment he notices the distance and feels the weight of his slipping? The answer is beautifully simple, and it is the whole heartbeat of this lecture. He should return. Simply, immediately, and without an ounce of despair. Because erring is part of being human, and returning is the very mark of the believer.

كُلُّ بَنِي آدَمَ خَطَّاءٌ وَخَيْرُ الْخَطَّائِينَ التَّوَّابُونَ

Every son of Adam errs, and the best of those who err are those who repent.

Source: Sunan al-Tirmidhi: 2499 · **Authenticity:** Hasan

Read that hadith slowly, because the Prophet ﷺ chose his words with breathtaking precision. He did not say the best of people are those who never sin, because he knew, and Allah knew, that such a person does not exist among the children of Adam. He said the best of those who err, and everyone errs, are those who **keep returning**. Your greatness in the sight of Allah is not measured by a spotless record. It is measured by how quickly and how sincerely you turn back after every stumble. And Allah has flung the door of that return so wide open that He forbade His servants from ever, under any circumstances, despairing of His mercy.

قُلْ يُعْبَادِي الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ
الرَّحِيمُ

*Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, **do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.***

Surah Az-Zumar (39:53)

All sins. Not most of them. Not the small ones only. All of them, for the one who sincerely turns back. And here is the part that should melt any heart still hesitating at the edge: Allah does not receive your return with a reluctant sigh, as if you have inconvenienced Him. The Prophet ﷺ told us that Allah rejoices at the repentance of His servant more than a man who was lost in a barren, waterless desert, whose camel had wandered off carrying all his food and drink, who had lain down under a tree in total hopelessness to await death, and who then suddenly opened his eyes to find his camel standing right beside him. That man's wild, disbelieving joy, that is the joy with which your Lord welcomes you back. So do not let Shaytan whisper that your sins are too many or your distance too great. One sincere return is enough to reopen the entire connection.

SMALL, STEADY, PERMANENT

A Plan to Stay Returned

So how does a believer keep himself returned, rather than climbing back up only to drift off the same edge again a month later? Not through a single dramatic resolution made in a rush of emotion, the kind that burns bright for three days and then dies. It is the small and constant deeds that keep a heart alive, watered, and green. Let me name them for you plainly.

Guard your five daily prayers as the anchor of your entire day. And when one of them has been slipping, do not just resolve to do better in a vague way; return that specific prayer to its time and pray it as though it were the very last one you will ever offer. Keep a daily appointment with the Book of Allah, even a single page read slowly, so that His words keep gently correcting your direction before the distance has any room to grow. Take a fixed portion of your day for *istighfar* and *dhikr*, because a tongue kept moist with the remembrance of Allah keeps the heart from hardening into stone. And give a little in charity, even in secret, even a small coin, because charity extinguishes sin the way water extinguishes fire.

Then, and do not underestimate this one, choose your company with real care. A person follows the way of his closest friend, and the company that reminds you of Allah will carry you back home every single time you begin to wander off. None of these things, my beloved, is a mountain. They are small, steady waterings. And they are precisely how a wandering heart is brought home and, more importantly, **kept there**. So do not sit around waiting for a perfect state of focus or a fresh season of worship to begin them. Begin now, today, with whatever is small and sustainable, and let consistency do the slow, quiet work that intensity alone never could.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

It Is Whether You Kept Coming Back

One of the hardest things for the human heart to accept is that it is still in process, still unfinished, still on the road. We love to think in terms of arrival, of having made it or failed. But with faith there is no finish line in this life. There is only direction. So ask yourself the only question that ultimately matters: are you moving toward Allah, or away from Him? Even if your pace is painfully slow, direction still matters, because slow movement toward Allah is infinitely better than fast movement away from Him. And growth is rarely a straight upward line. It is more like layers being peeled away one at a time, so that what feels like going backward is often just something deeper being uncovered, and if you stay consistent you will move past it, even when it takes far longer than you hoped.

And please, do not mistake Allah's delay for His rejection. Sometimes He delays a thing precisely so that your heart can grow in the waiting, because if everything you wanted arrived the instant you asked, you would never learn patience, never learn dependence, never learn to keep knocking on a door that has not yet opened. The delay is not a refusal. It is development. And while you wait, know with certainty that Allah sees the effort that not a single other person sees: the quiet *du'a* whispered in the dark, the private struggle you never mention to anyone, the temptation you resisted when nobody in the world was

watching. People often mistake silence for absence, thinking that if they feel nothing then nothing is happening. But so much of the heart's real work happens in silence, with no signs and no rush of emotion. So let your trust run deeper than your feelings, because feelings rise and fall like the tide, while the work of Allah in a sincere heart continues even when you cannot feel a thing.

And when you look back across everything, you begin to realise that most of your life was shaped by moments you did not understand at the time. Things that confused you became your lessons. Things that hurt you softened you. Things that slowed you down were quietly protecting you. If that has been true of your past, then trust that it is just as true of your present. You are simply still standing inside the moment, and you cannot yet see its full meaning. And as you keep returning, over and over, something quietly transforms within you. The heart stops swinging wildly between the extremes. It stops collapsing every time life goes wrong, and it stops growing arrogant every time life goes right. It settles into a steadiness that is quiet but immensely strong, a steadiness that Allah Himself places into the heart that keeps coming back. Because every single return is you teaching your own heart not to run away.

In the end, your relationship with your Lord is not built on one shining moment on Laylat al-Qadr or one tearful day on 'Arafah. It is built on a lifetime of returning, a lifetime of trying again after every mistake, of standing back up after every slip. That is what makes it real: not perfection, but persistence. Not constant strength, but constant return. And this is why Allah, in His wisdom, measures the deed not by its dazzling beginning but by how it ends.

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِانْحَوَاتِمْ

Deeds are judged only by their endings.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6607 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

So do not be the one who only worships when life feels perfectly aligned, who lights up for blessings and recoils from hardship, who stands forever on the trembling edge. Be the one whose connection is bigger than his circumstances. Be the one who returns even when it is hard, who continues even when it feels slow, who keeps facing the qiblah of his heart toward Allah no matter which way the winds of his life are blowing. Because in the end, it was never about how fast you moved or how far you fell. It was only ever

about this: **did you keep coming back?** By the mercy of the One who turns every heart, let your answer, and mine, always be yes.

☰ Your Action Plan: Keep Coming Back

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

1 Run the honest self-audit

Name the three worst things you fear could happen to you, then ask: would they change my relationship with Allah? Wherever the answer is yes, that is exactly where you have a relationship to build with the Giver, not just the gift.

TODAY

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

2 Anchor your five prayers on time

Pick the one prayer that has been slipping most and return it to its proper time this week, praying it as though it were your last. Do not chase perfection in all five at once; secure the weak link first.

THIS WEEK

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

3 Keep a daily appointment with Allah's words

Read just one page of the Qur'an slowly every day, plus a fixed portion of istighfar and dhikr. A tongue kept moist with His remembrance keeps the heart from hardening.

DAILY

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

4 Choose your company on purpose

Reach out to one friend who reminds you of Allah and make them a regular part of your week. You follow the way of your closest companion, so choose one who carries you home.

THIS WEEK

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

🚩 The 7-Day Return Challenge

For seven days straight, refuse to let a single slip end your day. Every time you catch yourself drifting, a missed prayer, a wasted hour, a moment of displeasure with your Lord, immediately turn back: say astaghfirullah, do one small good deed, and keep moving. Track it with one honest line in a journal each night: 'Today I slipped here, and I returned by doing this.' The goal is not a flawless week; it is to train your heart, permanently, that a stumble is never the end, only an invitation to come back. Do this for seven days and you will have built the one habit that outlasts every season: the reflex to always, always return.



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.