

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

The Eye That Sees the Gift

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

The Eye That Sees the Gift

Two people can live inside the same life and inhabit two different worlds. The difference is not their circumstances. It is the eye of the heart, and whether it has learned to see the gift.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Two People, One Life

My dear brother, my dear sister, I want you to imagine two people who live in the exact same house. Same walls, same roof, same kitchen, same bills at the end of the month. They earn a similar income. They enjoy a similar level of health. And yet if you were to sit with the first over a cup of tea and ask him, honestly, how is life? He would smile, he would find the good in his days, and he would say *alhamdulillah* with a heart that means it. Then you go and sit with the second, in a house that mirrors the first almost detail for detail, and you ask the same simple question. And he sighs. He speaks as though he were Ayyub in the very depth of his trial, as though no living soul carries a burden as heavy as his, as though the whole world has conspired against him. Same house. Same income. Same health. And two completely different worlds.

How is this possible? Because there is a quiet, unbreakable thread that ties the way we *speak* about our lives to the way we come to *experience* them. Speak about your life in the language of complaint, and your life will almost always begin to answer you in that same language, even when your life is, in truth, a beautiful one. The circumstances did not change. The heart that received them changed, and the tongue that described them changed, and once those two turned, the entire flavour of a life turned with them. This is not a soft, feel-good idea. It is one of the most practical and life-altering truths our religion teaches, and by the end of this lecture I want you to hold it in your hands like a tool you can actually use.

Let me show you that the Qur'an itself hands us this lesson through a story so ordinary you may have passed over it a hundred times, the story of a father visiting his son.

A STORY OF TWO ANSWERS

The Two Wives of Ismail

When Ibrahim, peace be upon him, came to Makkah to visit his son Ismail, he came on two separate occasions, and the difference between the two visits is one of the most instructive scenes in all of

scripture. On the first visit, Ismail was away. Ibrahim met his son's wife and asked her, gently, about their state of living. How are you managing? And she answered him only with the hardships. The narrowness. The want. The things they lacked. She complained of her condition and painted their life in shades of grey. Ibrahim left her a message, a quiet word for his son, and departed.

Time passed, and Ibrahim came again. By now Ismail had married a different woman, and Ibrahim, not revealing who he was, asked this new wife the very same question about their life. And listen to how she answered. She praised Allah. She spoke of ease. She spoke of good. She met the question with gratitude flowing off her tongue. And here is the point that should stop us in our tracks, my dear brother, my dear sister: their circumstances were nearly identical to those of the first wife. The same modest life in the same barren valley. Nothing external had improved. What had changed was the heart that received the blessing and the tongue that spoke of it.

It was never about the circumstances. It never is. The first woman looked at a bare table and saw everything that was missing. The second woman looked at the very same table and saw everything Allah had given. One home was a place of complaint and the other a place of gratitude, and yet by every measurable standard they were the same home. Ibrahim, with the wisdom Allah gave him, read the two hearts instantly, and the lesson has echoed down to us across four thousand years. Where do you fall, honestly, between those two women? When someone asks how you are, which tongue answers?

A COMMAND WE RUSH PAST

Speak of the Blessing

Allah does not leave us to guess at this. He commands us, in a short verse we often recite quickly and rarely sit with, to make our very speech an act of gratitude.

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

But as for the favour of your Lord, speak of it.

Surah Ad-Duha (93:11)

The scholars of tafsir explain that to speak of the favour of your Lord is itself a form of thanking Him, a *tahadduth bi ni'matillah*, a declaring aloud of what Allah has done for you. Now understand precisely what this is and what it is not. It is not the boasting that wounds the poor and swells the ego, for that kind of showing off is forbidden and it comes from a diseased heart. This is something else entirely. This is the heart so full that it overflows onto the tongue, naming the gift so that the Giver is never forgotten, so that the blessing does not simply pour through our fingers unnoticed and unnamed.

And here is the beautiful part: this is meant to descend into the smallest, most ordinary moments of your day. Let me ask you something honestly. The next time you take a sip of cool water and your tongue says *alhamdulillah*, did you actually mean it for that sip? Did your heart register, even for the length of a single breath, that Allah just gave you cool, clean water sliding down a healthy throat, when there are people in hospital beds tonight who cannot swallow without pain, people who would trade everything they own for the ease you just experienced and did not notice? There is a quiet, enormous power in that pause. The grateful believer is a person of *fikr*, of constant gentle pondering, who traces every gift back to the Giver instead of letting a thousand mercies flow past him each day, unseen and unthanked.

A DISCIPLINE FOR THE EYES

Look Down, Not Up

Then the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave us a practical instruction so precise and so needed in our age that it feels as though it was spoken this morning. It is a discipline for the eyes, a training for where we point our gaze, and it protects the heart from the endless, hollowing disease of always wanting more.

انظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ فَوْقَكُمْ، فَهُوَ أَجْدَرُ أَنْ لَا تَزْدُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ

Look to those who are below you and do not look to those who are above you, for that is more fitting so that you do not belittle the blessing of Allah upon you.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6490 and Sahih Muslim: 2963 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

Notice, my dear brother, my dear sister, that this hadith has two distinct halves, and both of them are about gratitude. The first half governs your *vision*: look to those who have less, not to those who have more. The upward stare breeds resentment; it makes you a beggar in your own home. The downward glance breeds thankfulness; it makes you a king. The second half governs your *tongue*: do not belittle the blessing of Allah upon you. One half guards what you see, the other guards what you say, and between the two of them the Prophet ﷺ has fenced in the heart on both sides.

And understand how far this reaches. It governs the private self-talk, the endless muttered commentary you keep running about your own days, the words no one else ever hears. It governs how you speak inside your family, at your table, in your marriage. It governs how you speak in your community. It is the entire difference between the optimist and the pessimist, two people who can stand before the identical scene and read from it two opposite verdicts. The believer is trained, deliberately, to refuse the belittling word, even in the privacy of his own thoughts. Even when no one is listening. Because Allah is listening, and because your own heart is listening, and it becomes whatever you feed it.

AN OCEAN WE NEVER SEE

Blessings Beyond Counting

Part of the reason we belittle our blessings is embarrassingly simple: we have never once sat down and tried to count them. And Allah tells us plainly, in a verse of stunning gentleness, that we could not finish the count even if we spent our whole lives trying.

وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

*And if you were to count the favours of Allah, **you could never enumerate them.** Indeed, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

Surah An-Nahl (16:18)

Sit with the tenderness of how Allah closes that verse. He tells us we cannot count His favours, and then, instead of rebuking us for our helpless inability to thank Him for every single one, He names Himself the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful. As if to reassure the servant who feels crushed beneath the

sheer weight of blessing he could never repay: do not despair over what you cannot count; I know, and I forgive, and I am merciful. What a Lord we have.

Imam as-Sa'di, may Allah have mercy on him, made a beautiful observation here. He said the blessings of Allah upon us are of two kinds, and we constantly overlook one of them entirely. There are the blessings He has *granted*, the food and the family and the faith, and these we occasionally notice. But there are also the harms He has *turned away*, the accidents that never happened, the illnesses that never struck, the tragedies that passed you by while you slept, the enemies whose plans never reached you. And this second kind, as-Sa'di said, is a vast and endless ocean that we never see, because the nature of a harm turned away is that it leaves no trace. You do not thank Allah for the car crash you were not in, but He steered you clear of it all the same.

Think only of your own body for a moment. The heart that has been beating faithfully through this entire lecture without a single command from you. The breath drawn in and released thousands of times since you woke this morning, and you managed not one of them. The eyes reading these words. The mind assembling them into meaning. The limbs that carried you to where you are sitting. Not one of these did you earn, not one of them can you replicate, and not one of them can you count to the end. Do you see it now? The disease was never a shortage of blessing. The disease is a sleeping eye that has simply stopped seeing the blessing it is drowning in. And gratitude begins the very moment you wake that eye and quietly, honestly, look.

THE PROPHET'S PLATE

He Never Found Fault With Food

So where does a life of gratitude actually begin? Let me take you to something small, almost startlingly small, in the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and I want you to let it work on you slowly.

مَا عَابَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ طَعَامًا قَطُّ، إِنْ اِشْتَهَاهُ أَكَلَهُ، وَإِنْ
كَرِهَهُ تَرَكَهُ

The Prophet ﷺ never once found fault with any food. If he desired it he ate it, and if he disliked it he simply left it.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 3563 and Sahih Muslim: 2064 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun Alayh (agreed upon)

He never once pointed at a plate and said a single word against it. Now hold that against the reality of who this man was. This was not a poor villager who had never known anything better. This was the man whose authority, by the end of his life, reached across an enormous swath of the known world, a man of honour and power and rank, the most beloved of all creation to Allah, ﷺ. And with all of that, he never disparaged a morsel of food for the entire span of his life.

Now hold it against yourself, and be honest with me. When a person has tasted both hard times and easy times, he tends to grow selective, even fussy, with his blessings. We sit down before a plate, and what happens inside us? Our minds begin writing reviews. The bread is a little dry today. This is overcooked. That is not quite how I like it. This restaurant used to be better. We have become, quietly, in the privacy of our own hearts, a panel of food critics, scoring every meal that Allah lays before us, awarding stars and deducting them, muttering our little complaints over a bounty that half the earth would weep to receive. The Prophet ﷺ, with all his rank, did not do this with a single bite of a single meal across an entire lifetime. Whether the food came from a wealthy host or a poor one, whether it was set before him by strangers or by his own family, he never disparaged it. He was simply grateful for it. And watch, now, how that gratitude can utterly transform a thing.

HOW A WORD TRAVELS

The Excellent Vinegar

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, told of a day when the Prophet ﷺ took him by the hand and walked him home to share a meal. When they arrived, there was almost nothing in the house, only some

dry pieces of bread. The bread was set out, and the Prophet ﷺ asked, is there anything to dip it in, anything to soften it? They searched and said, we have nothing but a little vinegar. And without a pause, without a flicker of disappointment, the Prophet ﷺ said the words that turned the entire meal around.

نَعَمْ الْإِدَامُ الْخَلُّ

What an excellent condiment vinegar is.

Source: Sahih Muslim: 2052 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

He did not say, I wish we had honey. He did not sigh over the dryness of the bread. He looked at what was actually present, found the good in it, and named that good aloud. And here is the part that should make your heart ache with beauty. Jabir said that after that day, he came to love vinegar. Simply because the Prophet ﷺ had praised it, Jabir loved it for the rest of his life. And the narrator who reported this from Jabir said, and so I came to love vinegar too. And the one after him said the same. A single grateful sentence, spoken over dry bread in a nearly empty house, travelled down through the generations and made people love a humble, ordinary thing.

That, my dear brother, my dear sister, is the contagion of gratitude, and we must ask ourselves honestly which contagion we are spreading in our own homes. Because complaint is every bit as contagious. A child who grows up hearing his parents endlessly belittle the gifts of Allah, nothing is ever good enough, the food, the weather, the neighbours, the money, that child learns the language of ingratitude fluently, and he will speak it to his own children one day, until it becomes the family tongue, passed down like an inheritance of poverty inside houses full of provision. Do not be the source of that inheritance. The Prophet ﷺ said *alhamdulillah* over dry bread and vinegar. If he, who deserved more than any of us will ever deserve, was grateful for that, then who am I, who are you, to scorn what we have been given?

GRATITUDE IN THE STORM

Good in the Bleakest Hour

Perhaps you are thinking, that is fine for small daily annoyances, but what about real hardship, real fear, real crisis? Let me take you to one of the tensest days in the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ, the day of

Hudaybiyyah. The Muslims stood in a dangerous, brittle standoff outside Makkah. The air was thick with the threat of bloodshed. Everything hung by a thread. And Quraysh sent out their chief negotiator, a formidable man named Suhayl ibn Amr, who at that time stood firmly against the Muslims, though he would later become a beloved Companion.

When the Companions saw Suhayl approaching, their hearts sank, and one of them named him aloud with dread in his voice: Suhayl. But the Prophet ﷺ smiled. And he said, your affair has been made easy. Do you see what he did? The name Suhayl carries within it the meaning of ease, of smoothness, of things being made gentle. And in that heavy, dangerous moment, the Prophet ﷺ took the very name that struck fear into the others and read it as a sign from Allah that ease was on its way, that something good was about to be born out of this hardship.

He was not being naive, and he was certainly not being reckless. He was doing precisely what the grateful heart has trained itself to do: reaching into a difficult moment, finding the thread of good that Allah has woven into it somewhere, and pulling gently on that thread, saying *alhamdulillah*, there is something here. There is good in the small morsel of food, and there is good buried even in the great tragedy, something I can find, and lift up, and thank Allah for. Because here is the alternative, and we know it well. When you carry the constant negative lens instead, you ruin the moment for yourself first, and then you infect everyone around you, because pessimism spreads through a room like smoke. Allah could not have been clearer about which of these two roads leads where:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ
إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

*And remember when your Lord proclaimed: **If you are grateful, I will surely increase you, but if you are ungrateful, indeed My punishment is severe.***

Surah Ibrahim (14:7)

If you are grateful, I will increase you. This is not a suggestion, my dear brother, my dear sister. This is a contract, and it is signed by the Lord of the heavens and the earth Himself. Gratitude is not merely a pleasant personality trait or a nice manner. It is the very mechanism through which Allah expands and multiplies the blessing in your life. You want more good? Here is the divinely appointed door: be grateful for the good you already hold.

THE RARE FEW

Grateful or Ungrateful

And yet, alongside that magnificent promise of increase, Allah makes a quiet and sobering observation about His own servants, and He repeats it in His Book in more than one place: the truly grateful are few.

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ

And few of My servants are deeply grateful.

Surah Saba (34:13)

Few. Of all the countless servants of Allah, only a rare few climb to the rank of the *shakur*, the one whose entire being has been given over to thankfulness, whose default state is gratitude. And is this not strange, when you think about it? Gratitude is the most beautiful of qualities, and it ought to be the most natural thing in the world, because Allah pours His blessings upon us without our even asking, morning and night, so surely thankfulness should rise in us as effortlessly as breathing. And yet it is rare. Rare enough that Allah names its rarity. Which means that reaching it is a deliberate, chosen, cultivated thing, and the crowd will not carry you there. You have to decide to be one of the few.

Allah lays the two roads before every single human being who has ever lived and tells us plainly which way each soul will turn:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Indeed, We guided him to the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful.

Surah Al-Insan (76:3)

Shakiran or kafuran. Grateful or ungrateful. Pause on the word that stands opposite to gratitude, *shukr*. Its opposite in the verse is *kufur*, the same root as disbelief. And that is no accident at all. Ingratitude is the seed from which disbelief itself grows, and gratitude is woven into the very fabric of faith. To deny the blessing is the first cousin of denying the One who gave it. So when we belittle our blessings, we are not committing a small, harmless bad habit. We are drifting, one ungrateful mutter at a time, toward the far shore of *kufur*. And when we cultivate gratitude, we are watering the very roots of our iman.

TO PEOPLE, AND SO TO ALLAH

Whoever Does Not Thank People

Now the religion makes a move here that should completely reorder how you treat every single person in your life. The Prophet ﷺ tied our gratitude to Allah directly to our gratitude toward the people around us, and he made the one utterly impossible without the other.

مَنْ لَا يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ

Whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah.

Source: Sunan Abi Dawud: 4811 and Jami at-Tirmidhi: 1954 · **Authenticity:** Sahih (graded by al-Albani)

Read that slowly, my dear brother, my dear sister. The one who does not show gratitude to people has not, in reality, shown gratitude to Allah at all. The two cannot be separated and filed away in different drawers. You cannot stand before Allah in the depth of the night, claiming a heart brimming with thankfulness, while during the day you are cold and dismissive and ungrateful toward your spouse, your parents, your neighbour, the colleague who covered for you, the friend who stood by you when others

left. The quality of gratitude cannot be claimed in the abstract before Allah and then withheld from every concrete human being who has ever done you good. It does not work that way. Allah does not accept it that way.

And suddenly so many of the warnings in our Sharia click into place. Remember the woman the Prophet ﷺ told us about, the one who prayed abundantly and fasted abundantly and gave much in charity, and yet she was threatened with the Fire because her tongue was abusive to her neighbours. How could such a devoted worshipper end up there? Because there was a fracture running down the centre of her religion. She claimed a relationship with her Lord that somehow never reached the people at her own door. Her worship pointed up to the heavens but never flowed out to the humans beside her, and Allah will not accept a gratitude that is amputated at the wrist, that never extends its hand to another person. Gratitude that does not flow outward to people is simply not the gratitude Allah accepts.

REPAYING WITH A PRAYER

How the Companions Thanked

The Companions understood this link between thanking people and thanking Allah, and they did not merely understand it, they lived it beautifully. When the Muhajirun arrived in Madinah as refugees, having abandoned their homes and their wealth and everything they owned back in Makkah, the Ansar received them with a generosity the world had frankly never witnessed. They shared their houses. They shared their wealth. They shared their land. They asked for nothing in return, and they gave with joy.

The Muhajirun were so overwhelmed, so moved by this flood of kindness, that they came to the Prophet ﷺ almost anxious, and they said: O Messenger of Allah, we have never seen a people more generous when they have much, nor more comforting and gracious when they have little, than these Ansar. They have shouldered all our burdens and shared everything they own. We fear they will carry away the entire reward for all of this good, and we will be left with nothing to offer. And listen, my dear brother, my dear sister, to how the Prophet ﷺ answered them, because it is the very heart of everything we are speaking about today.

لَا، مَا أَثْنَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَدَعَوْتُمْ اللَّهَ لَهُمْ

No, not as long as you praise them and supplicate to Allah for them.

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 2487 · **Authenticity:** Hasan Sahih

As long as you praise them and make du'a for them, he said, the reward is shared, and you have not been left in their debt. Do you feel the weight of this? The Prophet ﷺ taught the Companions that the spoken word of genuine thanks, and the sincere prayer raised for the one who helped you, are themselves a real and weighty repayment, counted and measured on the scales of Allah. The Muhajirun could never match the material wealth of the Ansar, that door was closed to them. But they could thank them, and praise them, and lift their hands and beg Allah to reward them, and that alone was enough to make them full partners in the reward.

Now bring this home. How many people in your own life have carried you when you could not carry yourself? Your parents, above every other soul, who fed you and cleaned you and stayed awake through the long nights over your cradle when you could do absolutely nothing for yourself, not even say thank you? You may never be able to repay them in kind. It is, in truth, impossible. But you can thank them, openly, warmly, and often. And you can raise your hands to the heavens and beg Allah to reward them with a good that you yourself could never give them. That is within the reach of the very poorest and weakest among us, and the Prophet ﷺ called it the utmost in praise. When did you last do it?

THE DISEASE IN OUR POCKETS

The Plate, the Phone, and the Restless Eye

Let me bring all of this into the texture of your actual days, because I promise you the very diseases the Prophet ﷺ warned against fourteen centuries ago have only grown louder and more relentless in our time. Many of us, if we are honest, have become professional critics of our blessings. We sit before food that millions on this earth would weep with joy to be offered, and we quietly score it in our heads like a review we would leave online. Two stars. Would not order again. Over a plate that is, by the standards of most of human history and most of the present world, a feast.

And then there is the device in your pocket, the one that has quietly become the single greatest engine of ingratitude ever placed in a human hand. We hold in our palms instant access to the curated lives of everyone we know and millions we do not, and we have taken the clear command of the Prophet ﷺ and turned it precisely upside down. Instead of looking to those below us, we scroll all day long through the carefully chosen, filtered, staged highlights of those who appear to be above us. The better house. The better holiday. The better body. The better marriage. The better life. And we rise from that screen quietly poisoned, our own genuine, God-given blessings suddenly made to look small and grey and shabby beside the manufactured brilliance of strangers who are, more often than not, drowning in their own private struggles they would never post.

This is the engine of modern misery, my dear brother, my dear sister, and the astonishing thing is that the Prophet ﷺ named its exact cure fourteen hundred years before the screen was ever invented: look down, not up, and you will not belittle the blessing of Allah upon you. Every time your thumb reaches for that comparison, you are choosing the upward stare that the Prophet ﷺ explicitly warned you away from. And the cure is not to hate technology; it is to reclaim the direction of your gaze.

And then consider the quietest thing of all, your own self-talk, the endless private commentary you keep running about your own life. Some of us have trained ourselves into a hard reflex of negativity, where the very first thing the tongue and the mind reach for is the flaw, the lack, the one thing that went wrong today, while the hundred things that went right slide past without a single word of acknowledgement. And a person will say, well, this is just how I am, I'm just a negative person, I always go straight to the bad. And I will tell you gently: yes, that is true, but only because it is a *habit*, and habits, by the mercy of Allah, are not permanent. They are remade exactly the way they were made, one small repeated choice at a time.

And this is precisely why the Prophet ﷺ pointed us toward the small things, the daily things, the sip of water and the dry bread and the humble vinegar. Train yourself to say *alhamdulillah* for something so small that most people would belittle it, and then do it again tomorrow, and again the day after, and slowly, quietly, the channel of the heart is recut, until gratitude becomes the reflex and complaint becomes the exception. And watch, then, what Allah does in return, because He gave you His word: He will take the small good you were grateful for and He will grow it, and He will let its colour spread across the rest of your circumstances, and He will open doors you never knew were there. So catch yourself. The very next time the belittling word rises to your tongue, swallow it, and reach instead for the

alhamdulillah that is always, always available to you, because there is not a single breath you take that is not itself a blessing worth thanking Allah for.

THE THREE PILLARS

Heart, Tongue, and Limbs

So what does complete gratitude actually look like when it is whole? The scholars taught that true *shukr* stands upon three pillars, and it is not complete until all three are standing together. The first is the gratitude of the *heart*: that you genuinely, inwardly feel thankful. And to feel it, you must first stop and contemplate the blessing, take a deliberate step back and actually count what has been done for you, by Allah and even by the people in your life. The second is the gratitude of the *tongue*: that you praise Allah openly and thank the people who do you good, and that you do so constantly, not once a year, but as a way of speaking. And the third is the gratitude of the *limbs*: that you take the very blessing Allah gave you and turn it into obedience, so the gift itself becomes an act of worship.

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, gathered these three into a single description worth engraving on the heart. He said gratitude is built upon three pillars: that the heart acknowledge the blessing as coming from Allah, that the tongue speak openly in His praise, and that the limbs be employed in the obedience of the One who bestowed it. And then he added the warning: whoever falls short in any of the three has fallen short in his thankfulness. See how they weave together into one seamless whole. You *feel* the blessing, then you *confirm* the feeling with your words, then your *deeds* confirm your words. A gratitude that is only felt but never spoken is incomplete. A gratitude that is spoken but never lived is incomplete. All three, or none.

And there is no greater proof of that third pillar than the Prophet ﷺ himself. Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, described how he would stand in the depth of the night in prayer until his blessed feet swelled from the standing. And when she asked him, gently, why he burdened himself so, when Allah had already forgiven him his past and future faults, he gave the answer that defines a grateful servant for all time:

أَفَلَا أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

Shall I not, then, be a grateful servant?

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

His gratitude was not merely words resting on the tongue. It stood him upright through the long night until his feet swelled beneath him. That is a body employed in the obedience of the One who gave it. And think of Dawud, peace be upon him, whom Allah blessed with kingdom and strength and a voice of surpassing beauty, and who answered every one of these gifts by turning it back into worship, until his fasting and his night prayer became the very standard the Prophet ﷺ praised, for the most beloved fasting to Allah is the fasting of Dawud, who would fast one day and break the next. He took the blessings Allah gave him, thanked Allah for them with heart and tongue, and then turned them around to become a mercy to the whole world. That is the full and complete circle of shukr: to feel it, to speak it, and to let your very limbs carry it.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

Be Generous in Thanking People

And please, do not neglect that middle pillar with the people closest to you, because this is precisely where so many of us are weakest. How often does a man excuse his coldness by saying, well, I show my love through my actions, my actions speak louder than words? Brother, sister, hear me: you will never, ever love the people around you more than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ loved his Companions and his family, and he was constant, generous, tireless in voicing his gratitude to them out loud. So yes, let your actions be loud. But do not let your words of thanks fall silent, because the Prophet ﷺ taught us that even when you have nothing material to give in return, the tongue alone can settle the entire debt.

مَنْ صُنِعَ إِلَيْهِ مَعْرُوفٌ فَقَالَ لِفَاعِلِهِ: جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ
خَيْرًا، فَقَدْ أَبْلَغَ فِي الشَّانِ

*Whoever has a kindness done for him and says to the one who did it, **may Allah reward you with good**, has indeed done the utmost in praising and thanking him.*

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 2035 · **Authenticity:** Sahih (graded by al-Albani)

There is a whole world of difference between a cold, mumbled, half-swallowed acknowledgement and a warm *jazakAllahu khayran* said while looking a person straight in the eye and meaning it with your whole chest. And remember the principle running through everything today, that shukr is for the small kindnesses and the large alike, and that whoever is not grateful for the little will never be grateful for the much. It is exactly like patience. If you cannot show *sabr* with the small daily irritations, how on earth will you carry a great trial when it descends? So the believer trains on the small: thanking Allah and thanking people for the little kindnesses. And in doing so, you actually *magnify* those kindnesses, because when you show a person that their small gift genuinely reached your heart, you make that gift large in their own eyes, you make them glad they gave, and you make them long to give again. That is the very mechanism Allah described, if you are grateful I will increase you, playing out right there in the hearts of the people around you.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

What Will They Remember Hearing

Before we turn to what you will actually do, carry one honest question home with you. What is the *sound* of my house? When my family closes their eyes and pictures me at the dinner table, what do they hear? Do they hear a person who names the good and thanks Allah for it, who found the excellent in the vinegar and the ease in the name of Suhayl? Or do they hear someone who finds the flaw in every dish and the cloud in front of every sun?

Because our children are listening far more closely than we ever realise, and they are not only memorising our words, they are quietly inheriting our entire lens on the world. A child raised in a home where the blessings of Allah are constantly belittled learns, deep in his bones, that the world is a disappointment and that nothing is ever quite enough, and he will carry that poverty of heart with him into a house one day overflowing with provision, and still feel poor. But a child raised amid *alhamdulillah* learns to see the gift hidden inside the small things, and he will feel wealthy and content even in a home that has little. We are not only thanking Allah for our own sakes, my dear brother, my dear sister. We are handing our children, right now, either the eye that sees the gift or the eye that sees only the lack, and they will keep whichever one we give them for the rest of their lives, and hand it on again to theirs.

So ask yourself, with the same seriousness you would examine your salah and your recitation of the Qur'an: how is my gratitude, really? When did I last thank Allah for a blessing so ordinary that I had simply stopped noticing it was even there? When did I last look my mother, my father, my spouse in the eye and thank them with real, unguarded warmth? When did I last catch a complaint climbing up my tongue and turn it, by a deliberate act of will, into praise? These are not abstract or poetic questions. They are the actual daily work of remaking a heart, one small *alhamdulillah* at a time, until the grateful word becomes the first word and not the forgotten last one, and until we are counted, by the sheer mercy of Allah, among the rare few He named as truly, deeply thankful. And guard, above every other blessing, the greatest of them all: the blessing of iman, of being guided to *la ilaha illa Allah* when so many were not. A person can be grateful for his health and his wealth and forget entirely to thank Allah that He opened his heart to Islam, and there is no blessing on this whole earth that comes anywhere near to that one.

☰ Your Action Plan: See the Gift

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

1 Name one overlooked blessing before you sleep

Each night, pick a single blessing so ordinary you had stopped noticing it, the beating heart, the warm bed, the roof, and say alhamdulillah while actually feeling it. Recut the channel of the heart one small mercy at a time.

EVERY NIGHT

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

2 Thank one person out loud, looking them in the eye

Choose someone who has done you good, your parent, spouse, or a colleague, and say jazakAllahu khayran with real warmth. Remember: whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah.

DAILY

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

3 Flip the upward stare into a downward glance

When you catch yourself scrolling and comparing, or comparing your life to another's, deliberately pause and look instead to those with less, and let that view refill your heart with thankfulness.

THIS WEEK

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

4 Refuse the belittling word at the table

For every meal this week, catch the review your mind wants to write, swallow the complaint, and find one good thing to name aloud, just as the Prophet ﷺ praised the vinegar.

THIS WEEK

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

🚩 The 7-Day Gratitude Challenge

For seven days straight, do three things every single day: name one overlooked blessing to Allah out loud, thank one human being to their face, and catch one complaint before it leaves your tongue and turn it into praise. Keep a single line at the end of each day recording what you were most grateful for. Seven days is only the beginning, the way you first cut the channel; the goal is a heart that reaches for alhamdulillah as naturally as it breathes, 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.