

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

The Soul Behind the Deed: Living With Sincerity in an Age of Applause

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

The Soul Behind the Deed: Living With Sincerity in an Age of Applause

Two people pray side by side; only one prayer rises. The difference is never on the face — it is in the heart.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Two People, One Prayer, Two Destinies

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me begin with a scene you have lived a thousand times without ever pausing to consider it. Imagine two people standing shoulder to shoulder in the same row of prayer. Their shoulders touch. Their feet are aligned. They bow at the same instant, they prostrate at the same instant, they whisper the same words with the same tongue-movements, and they rise together as if one body. To the eye of every person in that masjid, they are identical. A camera would record no difference between them. And yet, my beloved, in the sight of the One who sees what no camera can capture, one of those prayers is soaring upward, written among the accepted, glowing like light, while the other has already dissolved into nothing before the person even lifted his head from the ground.

What separated them? Not the number of rak'ahs. Not the length of the recitation. Not the beauty of the voice. It was something so quiet, so hidden, so utterly invisible that a person can miss it for an entire lifetime, and yet so heavy that upon it hangs the acceptance of every prayer, every fast, every charity, and every single deed you will ever perform. It is the condition of the heart. It is your *niyyah*, your intention, and the inner reality of that intention which we call **ikhlas**, sincerity: doing the deed purely, only, entirely for Allah.

I want to be honest with you about why I feel this topic is not a luxury reserved for the deeply pious, but an emergency for every one of us, myself first. We live in an age that is drunk on appearances. We photograph our food before we taste it. We broadcast our achievements before we have finished them. We curate a version of ourselves for strangers who will never truly know us, and then we anxiously wait to see how many of them approve. The disease of doing things to be seen has become so normal that we no longer notice it, because it is the very water we swim in. And that, my friend, is exactly why we must stop today and look inward. Because a body without a soul is a corpse, and a deed without sincerity is a beautiful corpse dressed up for a funeral.

So the question I want you to carry through this entire lecture is not the question we usually ask. We usually ask ourselves, *what did I do?* How much did I pray, how much did I give, how much did I fast. But the question that decides everything, the question that will be asked of you when you stand alone before Allah, is far simpler and far more terrifying: **for whom did you do it?**

THE PURPOSE OF YOUR EXISTENCE

Created for One, Needed by None

Allah did not leave this matter of intention to your guesswork. He wove it into the very reason you exist. Listen to how the Qur'an frames the purpose of your creation, and notice the astonishing thing Allah says immediately afterward.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ * مَا أُرِيدُ
مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُونِ * إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ
الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ

*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except **to worship Me**. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allah who is the Continual Provider, the firm Possessor of strength.*

Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:56-58)

Do you see the mercy hidden in that framing? Allah tells you He created you to worship Him, and then, before you can even begin to imagine that your worship somehow benefits Him, He clears it away instantly: He wants nothing from you. He is not enriched by your prayer. He is not fed by your fasting. He is not made stronger by your charity. So then, my dear brother, if Allah gains absolutely nothing from your worship, what is it that gives your worship any value at all? It is one thing only: that it is directed purely to Him. That it flows from love, from gratitude, from awe of Him alone. Strip that away

and what remains? A theatrical performance staged for an audience of created beings who cannot help you on the one Day you will need help the most.

And when Allah wanted to define the correct religion itself, He did not define it by rituals or numbers. He defined it by sincerity. Read this slowly, because it will reshape how you understand your faith.

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, **being sincere to Him in religion**, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion.*

Surah Al-Bayyinah (98:5)

The scholars of tafsir paused for a long time over those words, *mukhlisina labu ad-din*, being sincere to Him in religion. Ibn Kathir explained that it means purifying your worship for Allah alone, free of any partner, so that everything you do is seeking His face and nothing else. Al-Qurtubi added that *ikhlas* here is the direct opposite of two things: *riya*, showing off, and *shirk*, associating others with Allah. And then he drew a conclusion that should make us sit up straight: Allah calls this pure, undivided worship *din al-qayyimah*, the upright and straight religion itself. So sincerity is not a branch of the tree of faith, my beloved. It is the trunk. Cut the trunk, and every branch, every leaf, every fruit falls with it.

فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ * أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ

*So worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion. Unquestionably, **for Allah is the pure religion**.*

Surah Az-Zumar (39:2-3)

Imam as-Sa'di drew out the beauty of that phrase, *ala lillahi ad-din al-khalis*, for Allah alone is the pure religion. He said Allah has a right that no one else shares: the right to pure, unmixed devotion. Just as He is One in His essence, One in His lordship, One in His names, He is to be worshipped as One, with a devotion that admits no partner. And here is the part I want to whisper to you gently: we spend so much energy guarding against the shirk of the pagan who bows down to a statue of stone. But have we spent even a fraction of that energy guarding against the far subtler idol, the idol of our own ego, that bows secretly to the applause of the crowd?

THE HADITH THAT OPENS THE BOOKS

Everything Rests on the Intention

There is a hadith so central that the great scholars of Islam chose to begin their entire collections with it. Imam al-Bukhari opened his Sahih, the most authentic book after the Book of Allah, with this single narration. Why? Because it is the doorway. It is the master key. It defines the entire architecture of the religion in one breath.

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 attain some worldly gain or to marry a woman, **his migration is for that which he migrated.***

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

Imam ash-Shafi'i said this hadith is one third of all knowledge. Others said it enters into seventy chapters of fiqh. Why so much weight upon so few words? Because the Prophet ﷺ is teaching us that one and the same outward action can split into two completely opposite destinies based on nothing but the intention behind it. Picture it: two men make the exact same journey from Makkah to Madinah. Their feet tread the same road. Their bodies endure the same burning heat. Their camels drink from the same wells. And yet one arrives having earned the eternal pleasure of Allah, and the other arrives having earned only the marriage he was chasing. The road was identical. The heart was not. And in the ledger of Allah, only the heart was counted.

Now I want you to sit with what this means for your daily life, because it is breathtaking. Every single day you perform hundreds of actions that hover in a kind of neutral zone: they could be worship, or they could be empty habit. You eat. You work. You sleep. You speak. You smile at your spouse. You wrestle on the floor with your children. The scholars teach us that with a sincere intention, even these permissible acts of ordinary life are transformed into acts of worship. Your morsel of food becomes charity when you

intend to strengthen your body for obedience to Allah. Your sleep becomes an act of devotion when you intend it as rest to prepare you for the night prayer. My dear brother, my dear sister, through intention alone the believer turns an entire ordinary life into a continuous act of worship, while the heedless person can perform the mightiest deeds and walk away with empty hands.

A WARNING THAT MADE THE PIOUS TREMBLE

The First Three Thrown Into the Fire

Now brace your heart, because I am going to share a hadith that made the righteous of old shake with fear. It describes the first three people over whom the Fire will be kindled on the Day of Judgment. And who do you imagine they are? Not the drunkards. Not the thieves. Not the openly wicked. No, my beloved. They are, on the outside, among the very best of people.

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

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 favors, and he will recognize them. Allah will say: What did you do with them? He will say: I fought for Your sake 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 commanded that he be dragged upon his face until he is cast into the Fire.

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

And the hadith continues. The second man is a scholar, someone who studied the sacred knowledge, taught it, and recited the entire Qur'an, but he did it so that people would call him learned. The third is a wealthy man who gave in charity to every good cause, but he did it so that people would call him generous. And all three, my dear brother, all three are dragged upon their faces into the Fire. Absorb the sheer horror of this. These are the three most celebrated deeds a human being can offer: giving your very life, teaching the Book of Allah, and spending your wealth on the poor. And yet, because the intention was rotten at the root, because the heart was performing for people rather than for Allah, the greatest deeds became the greatest ruin.

Imam an-Nawawi said this hadith is among the most severe warnings for the sincere, precisely because it shows that the loftiest, most public actions are exactly the ones the devil targets for corruption through the craving for reputation. So let me ask you honestly, and I ask myself first, in the privacy of your own soul: when I place my donation in the box at the masjid, does a part of me hope someone notices the amount? When I say something beautiful about the religion, do my eyes flicker to see who is impressed? When I stretch out my prayer and I sense someone watching, does my recitation somehow become just a little sweeter? Do not answer these aloud. Whisper them to your own heart in the darkness of the night, where no human being can see, because the night is exactly where sincerity is either born or quietly buried.

LAMPS FROM THE RIGHTEOUS

The Hardest Struggle of a Lifetime

The salaf, the righteous predecessors, understood something we have almost forgotten: that sincerity is the hardest jihad of all, because its battlefield is invisible and its enemy lives inside your own chest. Their words on this are like lamps carried into a dark room. Listen to one of the giants of the early generations, a mountain of knowledge and worship, confess this:

Sufyan ath-Thawri said, as Ibn Rajab records in his Jami' al-'Ulum wal-Hikam: *"I have not struggled against my soul in anything harder for me than my intention, because it keeps turning over on me."* Think about that, my beloved. This was not a beginner. This was Sufyan ath-Thawri. And he says the single hardest struggle of his entire life was purifying his intention, because it would not stay still. He would begin an act purely for Allah, and the whisper would slither in: *let the people see this*. He would beat it back, and it would return in a subtler disguise. That, my friend, is the lifelong battle. Do not ever imagine there comes a day when you have finally conquered your intention and can relax. The very Arabic word for the heart, *qalb*, comes from a root that means to turn and to flip, because that is exactly what it does, constantly.

And then there is the surgical precision of al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad, quoted by Ibn al-Qayyim in Madarij as-Salikin: *"Abandoning an action for the sake of people is showing off, and doing an action for the sake of people is shirk. And sincerity is that Allah frees you from both of them."* Sit with this masterpiece, because it exposes two traps that sit on opposite sides of the very same road. The first trap: you want to do a good deed, but you hold back because you are afraid of what people will say, afraid they will call you extreme, afraid they will think you are trying too hard. That fear that freezes your hand is itself a form of showing

off, because you have made people your reference point. The second trap is the obvious one: you do the deed, but you do it to be seen by them. Both are diseases. And sincerity, said al-Fudayl, is when Allah rescues you from both, so that you do the good because it is good and you no longer care who is watching and who is not.

Ibn al-Qayyim gave us an image I want you to carry in your pocket for the rest of your life. He described the sincere servant as a man walking a road crowded with thieves, carrying a treasure of gold and jewels. He hides it carefully. He conceals it from every eye. He is desperate to reach his home safely with it fully intact. That treasure, my dear brother, is your righteous deeds. And the thieves lining the road are the whispers of *riya* that would empty your hands before you ever arrive. The wise traveler does not spread his gold out in the marketplace for everyone to admire. He guards it, quietly, until he stands before the King who alone knows its true worth.

THE PROPHET ﷺ IN THE DARK

The Worship No One Ever Saw

Where do we see sincerity lived out in its most perfect human form? In the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whose worship in private was even greater than his worship in public. ‘Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, described how he would stand in prayer through the night until his blessed feet became swollen and cracked. She asked him, out of love and concern, why he exerted himself so severely when Allah had already forgiven him everything, past and future. And he answered her with words that should melt every heart: *"Should I not be a grateful servant?"* My beloved, notice what was absent from that scene. There was no congregation to applaud those midnight tears. There was no audience to admire that trembling. There was no one to record it, no one to be impressed. There was only Allah and a servant grateful in the dark. That is the very signature of sincerity: worship that flourishes precisely where no human eye could ever see it.

And consider the day of the conquest of Makkah. The Prophet ﷺ entered the city that had tortured his companions, driven him from his home, plotted his murder, and killed those he loved. He entered at the head of ten thousand soldiers, with absolute, total power resting in his hand. A man ruled by his ego, a man performing for history, would have taken a revenge that all the world would remember for a thousand years. Instead, my dear brother, he lowered his head upon his mount in humility until it nearly touched the saddle, out of sheer gratitude to Allah, and he turned to the very enemies who had brutalized him and said: *Go, for you are free.* This was a heart that sought no applause from men, only

the pleasure of Allah. His moment of greatest earthly power became his moment of deepest humility, because the victory was never about exalting the self. It was about humbling the self before the true Victor.

TREASURES HIDDEN FROM EVERY EYE

How the Companions Guarded Their Deeds

The companions learned this lesson from him and then lived it in ways that would astonish us. They became so protective of their sincerity that they went to extraordinary lengths to hide their good deeds from the eyes of people. It is reported that when ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, the mighty leader of the believers, the man whose footsteps the devil himself would flee from, walked the streets of Madinah by night, he would secretly carry sacks of provisions to the doors of the poor and the widows, leaving them and slipping away without ever revealing who the giver was. Picture it: the most powerful man on the face of the earth, delivering flour under the cover of darkness like a thief of good, so that his left hand would not know what his right hand had given, so that not even the recipient would know his name, so that the entire deed belonged to Allah alone.

And then there is that piercing story of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him. In the heat of battle he had overpowered a formidable enemy, pinned him beneath his sword, and was about to strike the final blow. In that instant, the man spat in ‘Ali’s face. And what did ‘Ali do? He immediately rose off the man and let him go free. When they asked him why on earth he would release an enemy at the very moment of victory, he explained: at the instant the man spat at him, he felt a surge of personal anger rise in his chest, and he feared that if he killed the man now, he would be killing him for his own ego rather than purely for the sake of Allah. So he refused to let his sword fall until his heart was clean again. My dear brother, look at the delicacy of that conscience. Even amid the chaos and blood of the battlefield he was auditing his intention. He would not let his blade move a single inch until it moved for Allah alone. When was the last time we examined our hearts with even a hundredth of that care?

SINCERITY IN THE AGE OF THE SCREEN

The Trial No Generation Has Faced Like Ours

Now let me bring this all the way home, into your pocket, into your living room, into the glowing rectangle of light that almost never leaves your hand. My dear brother, my dear sister, no generation in the history of humanity has faced the trial of *riya* as intensely as ours. The companions had to physically

walk to the door of the widow to be seen giving charity. You can broadcast your charity to ten thousand people with a single tap of your thumb. The scholar of old who craved praise had to travel for weeks and teach in person to be admired. You can post a verse, a reminder, a photograph of yourself in the front row of the masjid, and harvest the admiration of complete strangers before the prayer has even finished.

Now hear me carefully, because I am not saying that sharing beneficial knowledge is forbidden. It may be among the very greatest of deeds if the intention behind it is pure, if you are genuinely calling people to Allah. But I am asking you to be brutally honest with yourself about a temptation the salaf never dreamed of. When you post that you gave to the flood victims, is it truly to encourage others to give, or is it, if you dig one layer deeper, to be seen as generous? When you share that stunning photograph of the Ka'bah with yourself carefully placed in the frame, whose gaze are you really seeking, Allah's or your followers'? And when you film yourself handing charity to a poor man, have you perhaps stripped that man of his dignity and taken it as part of your payment, then taken the likes and comments of the internet as your only reward, leaving absolutely nothing stored with Allah? The Prophet ﷺ warned us with a chilling principle.

مَنْ سَمِعَ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، وَمَنْ يُرَائِي يُرَائِي اللَّهُ بِهِ

*Whoever does a deed to be heard of, Allah will expose him; and **whoever does a deed to be seen, Allah will make a show of him.***

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

The very platform we used to chase fame may one day rise up as a witness against us. And understand, my beloved, that this reaches far beyond charity and photographs. The father who works punishing hours: does he intend to fulfill his sacred duty to his family for the sake of Allah, turning every drop of his sweat into worship, or does he labor only to accumulate and to be admired for his wealth? The mother who exhausts herself, night after sleepless night, for her children: does she carry that exhaustion as a trust from Allah, earning reward with every feeding and every soothing, or has it curdled into a resentment she quietly nurses? The student who spends years pursuing knowledge: is it to lift the darkness of ignorance from himself and then serve the ummah, or is it to attach impressive titles to his name? The same action, the identical fatigue, the same lost hours, but two completely opposite outcomes recorded in the ledger of eternity, decided by a single silent question in the heart: **for whom?**

When the Whisper Comes and You Hate It

Now, before this drives anyone to despair, let me give you a truth so merciful and so liberating that I want you to breathe out as you read it. If a thought of showing off comes to you in the very middle of a good deed, and you dislike it, and you push it away, and you continue on for the sake of Allah, that thought does not harm you at all. The scholars are crystal clear on this. The mere arrival of the whisper is not *riya*. The companions themselves came to the Prophet ﷺ, distressed, saying they found whispers in their hearts so terrible they would rather be reduced to ashes than say them aloud, and what did he tell them?

ذَٰكَ صَرِيحُ الْإِيمَانِ

That is the clear sign of faith.

Source: Sahih Muslim: 132 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

He told them that the very fact they recognized the whisper as evil and hated it in their hearts was itself a sign of pure faith. So do not despair, my dear brother. Do not let the devil convince you that because a stray thought of showing off crossed your mind, your entire deed is ruined and you may as well give up. That is a second trap laid by the same enemy. *Riya* is when you welcome the whisper, embrace it, and let it take the steering wheel of your deed. But when you notice it, dislike it, and fight it back, that fight itself is worship. That struggle is beloved to Allah. So keep giving. Keep praying. Keep striving. And fight the whisper every time it comes, knowing that the fight is credited to your account.

TENDING THE GARDEN

How to Actually Cultivate a Sincere Heart

So how do we practically nurture this sincerity in a life so crowded with distraction and so hungry for validation? Understand first that sincerity is not a switch you flip once and forget. It is a garden you must tend every single day. Let me walk you through the path, and then we will make it concrete. First, renew your intention before every act, and then renew it again during the act. Before you enter the prayer, pause for a single heartbeat and remind your soul: *this is for Allah, not for the row of people behind me.*

Before your hand moves to give, whisper inwardly: *this is between me and my Lord*. That tiny habit, repeated across the day, is exactly like watering the garden. Ibn al-Qayyim taught that a small deed carried by sincerity outweighs a mountain of deeds hollowed out by its absence.

Second, and this is the anchor of the whole ship, cultivate secret deeds, deeds that not a single soul on this earth knows about except Allah. Let there be a charity you give that even your spouse never learns of. Let there be a portion of your night, even ten quiet minutes of prayer, that no eye witnesses. Let there be a du'a you make for someone who has wronged you, a du'a they will never, ever discover. These hidden deeds are precious beyond measure because they simply cannot be for anyone but Allah. There is no audience to perform for. The salaf used to weep on their deathbeds, hoping that some secret deed they had concealed their whole lives would be the very thing that saved them. Build that hidden account with Allah, my beloved, an account no one can see and no thief of *riya* can ever rob.

Third, chase consistency over grandeur. Do not run after the enormous, spectacular, public act. Run after the small, steady, private one. The Prophet ﷺ handed us the exact principle upon which a purified life is built.

أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ

The most beloved of deeds to Allah are those that are most consistent, even if they are few.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6464 and Sahih Muslim: 783 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaquun Alayh (agreed upon)

A quiet, consistent deed performed for years in the sight of Allah alone is worth more than an occasional public spectacle. The person who prays two humble units of night prayer every single night, unseen, is far closer to sincerity than the one who prays a hundred units once, on the night the whole community happens to be watching. So build small permanent habits: a daily portion of the Qur'an, a fixed amount of *istighfar* morning and evening, a nightly moment to check your intentions. These become the quiet machinery of a sincere heart. Fourth, guard your prayer above everything, because it is the honest barometer of your relationship with Allah. Ask yourself plainly whether your salah improves in private or only in public, and then labor to make your private prayer your very best prayer.

Fifth, keep righteous company, people who remind you of Allah instead of reminding you of yourself, whose gatherings turn your face toward the Hereafter rather than toward the applause of the crowd. Sixth, when you finally do a good deed, do not undo it by reminding people of it or fishing for their gratitude, for Allah warned us against nullifying our charity with reminders of our generosity and with causing hurt. And finally, my dear brother, make constant du'a that Allah Himself grant you sincerity, because the heart lies between two of the fingers of the Most Merciful, and He turns it however He wills. The one who cannot fix his own heart should fall to his knees and beg the One who owns all hearts.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

Walk Between Hope and Fear

My beloved, do not let this lecture crush you into despair, whispering to you that your deeds are hopelessly corrupt so why even bother. That too is a lie of the devil, who would love nothing more than for you to abandon good deeds entirely under the noble-sounding excuse that they are impure. No. Never. The door of Allah is flung wide open. He is the Most Generous. He knows your weakness intimately, He fashioned you, and He does not demand from you a flawless perfection you could never reach. He demands sincerity of striving. Keep doing the good. Keep purifying the intention. Keep fighting the whisper. And trust with everything in you that the One who sees the struggle inside your chest will reward the struggle itself.

But at the very same time, do not swing to the other extreme and grow careless, doing everything for the crowd and simply assuming acceptance is a guarantee. Walk the middle path of the true believer: hopeful in Allah's boundless mercy, watchful over your own shortcomings, and always, always turning back to Him. Here is the beautiful secret to end on: the person who genuinely fears *riya* and fights against it has already taken the first and greatest step toward sincerity. Your very concern as you read these words, that quiet worry rising in your heart right now, is itself a mercy and a sign of life. So take this reminder home. Whisper to your soul in the darkness tonight the only question that matters, and let it reshape everything you do tomorrow: **for whom?**

☰ Your Action Plan: Purify the Heart

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

1 Pause and rename the deed before you begin

Before you pray, give, or start any good act, take one heartbeat to whisper in your heart: 'This is for Allah alone, not for anyone watching.' Then renew it again halfway through.

DAILY

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

2 Plant one secret deed no one will ever know

Give a charity, pray a few extra units, or make a sincere du'a for someone who wronged you, and tell not a single soul, not even your closest family. Build a hidden account with Allah.

THIS WEEK

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

3 Make your private prayer your best prayer

Deliberately slow down and beautify a salah you pray completely alone, with no audience. Let your worship in the dark outshine your worship in the row.

DAILY

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

4 Guard the good you do from your own tongue and screen

When you do something good, resist the urge to mention it, post it, or wait for thanks. Let one recent good deed stay entirely between you and 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 straight days, commit to one small deed that not one human being on earth will know about: a hidden charity, a silent few minutes of night prayer, or a private du'a for someone who hurt you. Each night before you sleep, ask your own heart the single question that decides everything: 'For whom did I do it today?' Watch how quickly your heart grows sensitive to the difference. After seven days, do not stop, because sincerity is not a week-long project but the work of a lifetime. Let this become the quiet, permanent rhythm of a heart that lives for the gaze of 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.