

SIFAH LECTURE SERIES

Packing Light for the Journey Home

A practical lecture — knowledge you can act on

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SIFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Packing Light for the Journey Home

The one journey every soul is guaranteed to take, and how to prepare for it without abandoning the life you already live.

WHY THIS MATTERS

The One Trip You Cannot Cancel

My dear brother, my dear sister, let me begin with something simple and honest. Right now, at this very moment, every single one of us is planning something. One of us is planning for university, mapping out four years of courses, imagining the graduation photo already framed on the wall. Another is planning retirement, moving numbers around a spreadsheet late into the night, calculating pensions and interest and how many years the savings will stretch. Someone here is planning to buy a home, comparing neighbourhoods, refreshing mortgage rates at midnight. And someone else is simply planning a holiday, counting down the days until they can finally rest. We are, all of us, planners. We pour hours upon hours into events that *may or may not ever happen*.

And here is the strange, sobering thing. A man plans his retirement in careful detail and dies at fifty, never touching a dirham of it. A woman plans her wedding down to the flowers on the table and finds herself burying her fiancé instead. We prepare so intensely for futures that are not promised, and in the middle of all these uncertain plans, there sits one journey that is not a maybe at all. It is a certainty. Every single one of us will take it. Not one will be excused.

It is a journey that cannot be delayed by a single moment. No amount of wealth can buy a postponement. No amount of intelligence can outsmart it. No status, no fame, no connection can arrange an exemption. And here is what makes it truly unlike any other trip you have ever taken: **you cannot send someone in your place**. You cannot appoint a substitute to travel on your behalf. Kings and paupers, scholars and the unlettered, the newborn and the elderly, all walk the same road, alone. It is the journey from this fleeting world to the everlasting Hereafter. And I want you to notice the irony that should stop us in our tracks: this is the one journey we prepare for the *least*, even though it is the only journey we are absolutely guaranteed to take.

So let us sit together for the next while, not as a lecturer speaking down at you, but as two travellers resting under the same tree, checking whether our bags are packed for the road ahead. Because if there is any preparation worth interrupting our busy lives for, it is this one.

THE DEFINITION THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

How Allah Measures a Successful Life

Allah reminds us again and again throughout the Qur'an that this life is not our destination. It is not our home. It is an examination hall, and the results of this examination will decide where we spend forever. I want you to listen carefully to how Allah frames the entire story of human existence in a single, breathtaking verse.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أَجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

*Every soul shall taste death. And you will only be given your full reward on the Day of Resurrection. So whoever is drawn away from the Fire and admitted into Paradise **has truly succeeded**. And the life of this world is nothing but the enjoyment of deception.*

Surah Al Imran (3:185)

Now notice, my dear brother and sister, how Allah defines success here, because it will overturn everything the world has trained into us since childhood. Today the world measures success with a very particular set of instruments. Success is a fat bank account. Success is a prestigious degree hanging in a frame. Success is the promotion, the corner office, the large following on a glowing screen, a house with more rooms than the family could ever fill. We are conditioned to chase these and to feel like failures the

moment we fall short of them. But Allah, the One who created us and who alone knows how our story ends, defines success in words that quietly demolish that entire scoreboard.

Success is not becoming rich, for the wealthiest man on earth will one day be lowered into a grave that fits only his body and nothing of his fortune. Success is not becoming famous, for the most celebrated names of the generations before us are forgotten dust beneath our feet today. Success is not even a long life, for a long life spent heedless only lengthens the account that must be settled. Allah reduces the whole matter to a single line: whoever is *pulled away* from the Fire and *admitted into* the Garden, that one, and only that one, has truly succeeded. Everything else, however dazzling, eventually comes to an end.

Imam Ibn Kathir, in his commentary on this verse, points out that Allah deliberately calls the world's pleasure *ghurur*, deception, an enjoyment that lies to you. It appears solid and permanent while it is in your hands. It whispers to your heart that it will never leave. And then, sooner or later, either it slips from your grasp or death tears you away from it. Ibn Kathir notes that the one who takes only as much of the dunya as carries him toward the akhirah has understood the verse, while the one consumed by it has fallen for exactly the deception the verse came to warn against. So the question is not whether you enjoy the world. The question is whether the world has enjoyed you, chewed you up, and left you unprepared.

AN IMAGE YOU WILL NOT FORGET

Redecorating the Hotel Room

Let me paint you a scene. Imagine you check into a hotel for a single night. You know your flight leaves at sunrise. Now imagine that instead of resting, you spend the entire night repainting the walls a colour you love, ripping out the carpet to lay down a finer one, hanging expensive curtains, installing gold fixtures in the bathroom of a room you will walk out of forever in a few hours. Anyone watching would be certain you had lost your mind. Why pour your wealth and your sweat into a room you are about to abandon and never see again?

And yet, my dear brother and sister, this is precisely what so many of us do with our lives. We spend nearly every waking hour decorating a temporary lodging, this dunya, while almost completely neglecting the permanent home where we will live for eternity. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ captured this reality in an image so simple a child can grasp it, yet so deep that scholars have reflected on it for centuries.

مَا لِي وَلِلدُّنْيَا مَا أَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا كَرَاكِبٍ اسْتَظَلَّ
تَحْتَ شَجَرَةٍ ثُمَّ رَاحَ وَتَرَكَهَا

What have I to do with this world? I am, in relation to this world, only like a rider who took shade beneath a tree for a while, then moved on and left it behind.

Source: Jami at-Tirmidhi: 2377 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Look closely at what the Prophet ﷺ said, and just as importantly, at what he did not say. He did not tell us to abandon the world entirely, to refuse work, to neglect our families, to reject every comfort. Islam is not monasticism. The traveller who stops beneath the tree does benefit from its shade. He rests. He drinks. He gathers strength for the road. But he never once mistakes the tree for his home. He never unpacks his whole life beneath it. He knows the shade is a means, not an end, and that the journey continues at dawn.

That is exactly how the believer relates to this world. We use it. We benefit from it. We thank Allah for it. But our hearts are not tied to it with an anchor. When you love this world with your hands but not with your heart, you can hold it and let it go without breaking. When you love it with your heart, every loss shatters you, because you built your entire self on ground that was always going to move.

THE TRICK THAT WORKS ON ALL OF US

The Whisper Called 'Later'

Unfortunately, Shaytan works tirelessly to make us forget all of this, and I want you to understand his method, because it is genuinely clever. His most effective weapon is not to make us reject faith outright, for few of us would fall for something so crude. His weapon is far subtler. His weapon is a single word: *later*. He is patient, and he plays a long game. He convinces us we have plenty of time.

He whispers into the ear of the young man, "You are still young, enjoy yourself now, repent when you are older." He whispers to the young sister, "Wear the hijab later, once you have finished this phase of your

life." He whispers, "Memorise the Qur'an later. Grow closer to Allah after retirement. Get serious about the deen once the children have grown, once the mortgage is paid off, once life finally settles down." And life, my dear brother and sister, never settles down. There is always one more phase, one more milestone, one more excuse. Later becomes never, and never arrives disguised as a Tuesday afternoon that felt like any other.

But death does not send a calendar invitation. It does not knock politely and ask whether now is a convenient time. Listen to the anguished words that every heedless soul will one day cry out at the moment it is finally, irreversibly too late.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿١٠٠﴾
لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ
قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

*Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: My Lord, send me back, that I may do righteousness in that which I neglected. **Never!** It is only a word he is saying. And behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected.*

Surah Al-Mu'minun (23:99-100)

Reflect on this scene with me. Every single person who dies wishes, in that final moment, for one more chance. And notice what they wish for, because it is astonishing. Not one of them asks to go back to earn another million. Not one asks for one more chance to buy a bigger house or a faster car. Not one asks for another holiday or another promotion. Every soul at that threshold begs for one thing only: the opportunity to perform the righteous deeds it neglected. The one who worshipped the dunya his entire life suddenly sees it for the mirage it always was, and reaches, too late, for the only currency that crosses the barrier.

Imam al-Qurtubi comments that Allah answers this desperate plea with a single crushing word: *kalla*, meaning never, absolutely not. The door is shut. And then Allah calls it merely "a word he is saying," meaning that even if such a soul were returned, it would slide right back into its old habits, because the request was born of the terror of the moment and not of a truly changed heart. How tragic, then, would it be if we allowed ourselves to arrive at that very moment carrying that very same useless regret, a regret that changes nothing because the time for change has already passed us by.

A PRESCRIPTION FROM THE PROPHET ﷺ

Live Like a Stranger Passing Through

One of Shaytan's greatest tricks, my dear brother and sister, is that he makes us feel guaranteed a tomorrow, while carefully hiding from us the truth that tomorrow belongs to Allah alone. And against this exact deception, the Prophet ﷺ handed us a piece of advice so profound that scholars have written entire treatises on it. He took his companion by the shoulder, that gesture of a teacher who wants your full attention, and he said:

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ

Be in this world as though you were a stranger, or a wayfarer passing through.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6416 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

Think about what a stranger is. A stranger in a foreign land does not build permanent attachments. He does not sink his roots deep into soil that is not his own. His heart is always turned toward home. And a wayfarer, one who is merely passing through, is even lighter, because he does not even stop long enough to unpack his bags. This is the mindset the Prophet ﷺ commanded us to carry. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali wrote a beautiful commentary on this hadith, explaining that the believer treats the world the way a traveller treats the road: he takes only the provisions he needs to reach his destination, and refuses to be weighed down by anything that will only slow him down along the way.

And the companion who narrated this, the noble Abdullah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, understood it so deeply that he would add his own words of wisdom every time he passed it on.

إِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلَا تَنْتَظِرِ الصَّبَاحَ، وَإِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلَا
تَنْتَظِرِ الْمَسَاءَ، وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ لِمَرَضِكَ، وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ
لِمَوْتِكَ

When you reach the evening, do not expect to see the morning; and when you reach the morning, do not expect to see the evening. Take from your health for your sickness, and from your life for your death.

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6416 · **Authenticity:** Sahih

What incredible advice. Let me ask you honestly: if we truly lived with this consciousness, even for a single week, would our priorities not rearrange themselves overnight? We would become quicker to forgive the brother who wronged us, because who wants to meet Allah with a grudge still festering in his chest? We would become quicker to repent, refusing to carry sins to sleep with us. We would become quicker to pray, guarding the five as though each one might be our last standing before Allah. We would become quicker to reconcile the broken relationship, quicker to seek beneficial knowledge, quicker to reach into our pockets for the one in need. And why? Because we would understand, deep in our bones, that any given day might be our final chance to send something ahead of us.

NOT GLOOM, BUT CLARITY

Why Remembering Death Makes Life Sweeter

Now, I know what a heart might quietly whisper here: "All this talk of death is heavy. Is Islam trying to make me miserable? Am I supposed to be a joyless creature who cannot enjoy a single blessing?" And the scholars are unanimous, my dear brother and sister, that this is a complete misunderstanding.

Remembering death is not designed to depress the believer. It is designed to give life its proper perspective and, strangely enough, its true flavour.

Think about it. When you remember that your time here is limited, the most ordinary moments transform into opportunities for worship. A smile at your brother is no longer just a smile; it becomes a deliberate act of charity you chose to give. A prayer becomes more sincere, because some part of you senses it may be your last time standing before your Lord. A small kindness to a stranger becomes an investment deposited into an eternal account whose returns never diminish and never expire. Death remembered does not drain the colour out of life. It floods life with meaning, because suddenly nothing is wasted and everything can count.

Al-Hasan al-Basri, that towering figure of the early generations whose sermons could move an entire gathering to tears, understood this balance perfectly. He said that the believer in this world is like a captive whose whole concern is working to free his own neck. He did not say this because he hated life or resented Allah's blessings. He said it because he loved something greater than this life: he loved the meeting with Allah, and he understood that the captive's freedom lies on the far side of this world, not within it. His concern was never to escape enjoyment; it was to free himself from the shackles of heedlessness so that he could arrive home unburdened.

And this, my dear brother and sister, is the true balance of the believer, and I want you to hold it in your heart: **he works in this world with the energy of someone who will live forever, and he prepares for the next with the urgency of someone who might die tomorrow.** Not despair, not laziness, not withdrawal from the world, but a beautiful, focused, hopeful urgency. That is the mindset of a soul that is packed and ready.

THE MANUAL ON THE HIGHEST SHELF

We Already Have the Map

When you buy any complex device, it arrives with a manual that tells you how to operate it, what to avoid, and how to reach the outcome the maker intended. It would be foolish to throw the manual in the bin and then complain when the device breaks in your hands. And Allah, our Maker, did not send us into this examination without a manual for the journey home. He gave us the Qur'an. He gave us the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ. And between the two of them, every question about our final destination has already been answered.

So here is the tragedy of our age, and I say it gently but honestly. The tragedy is not that we lack the manual. Nearly every home has a copy of the Qur'an. The tragedy is that the manual sits on the highest shelf, wrapped in a beautiful cloth, unopened for months at a time, while we eagerly consult a thousand other guides for a thousand lesser matters. We will read reviews for an hour before buying a kettle, but we will not read a page of the Book that decides our eternity.

Let me ask you to examine your own week, honestly, just between you and Allah. How many hours went to the screen in your hand, scrolling through the lives of strangers, absorbing outrage and entertainment that will not weigh the weight of a feather on the Day of Judgement? And how many minutes went to the Book of Allah, the actual manual for the journey you are certainly, undeniably about to take? We track the notifications on our phones with obsessive care, yet we do not track the state of our own hearts. We can recite the plot of every series we follow, yet we do not know the meaning of the verses we recite in our own prayers. This is the very imbalance the verse warned us about: the enjoyment of deception has quietly occupied the space that should have belonged to preparation for eternity.

LEARN FROM THE ONES WHO ARRIVED READY

How the Best of Us Prepared

Now here is what should truly shake us awake. The Prophet ﷺ himself, who was promised Paradise, who was forgiven every past and future shortcoming, still stood in prayer through the night until his blessed feet would swell. When Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, asked him why he exerted himself so when Allah had already forgiven him, he answered with words that should echo in our chests: *Shall I not be a grateful servant?* Here was a man with nothing to fear about his final destination, and still he prepared as though everything depended on it. So let me ask you plainly: if he prepared with such intensity, what excuse can we possibly offer, we who have received no such guarantee?

And look at Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, the greatest of this Ummah after its Prophet ﷺ. Despite being given the glad tidings of Paradise while he still walked the earth, he would say that he wished he were a tree that would be eaten and then simply cease to exist, so terrified was he of standing before Allah. Look at Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, the mighty ruler under whom two empires fell, who would hold a single straw between his fingers and say that he wished he were that straw, that he were nothing at all, so heavy was the weight of accountability on his heart.

Do not misunderstand these men, my dear brother and sister. These were not weak or fearful people. These were the strongest of the strong, the bravest of the brave, men who faced armies without flinching.

Their fear was not weakness. Their fear was **clarity**. They saw the journey for exactly what it was, and they packed accordingly. And meanwhile we, with a fraction of their deeds to our name, walk about relaxed and unbothered, as though our safety has somehow already been signed and stamped. The ones with the most reason to feel secure feared the most, and the ones with the least reason to feel secure fear the least. That equation should trouble us enough to change.

A QUESTION YOU MUST ANSWER

If This Were Your Last Friday

So let me ask you to do something difficult with me for just a moment. I want you to truly imagine that this is your final Friday. Imagine this is the last reminder you will ever hear in your life. Imagine that before next Friday arrives, your name will be the one announced for the funeral prayer, and the same people sitting near you now will be the ones carrying your body to the grave. And this is not a far-fetched thought. Someone in some masjid heard their final khutbah last Friday and had no idea. It could just as easily be one of us. It could just as easily be me, or you.

Now answer honestly, in the privacy of your own heart. What would you wish you had done differently? Standing at that edge, would you wish for one more hour at the office? Would you long for one more episode of a show, one more hour of scrolling, one more argument won online against a person you will never meet? Or would your soul cry out for one more sincere sajdah placed before your Lord, one more page of the Qur'an recited with your heart present, one more chance to look your mother and father in the eye and tell them you love them, one more opportunity to raise your hands and beg Allah for forgiveness before the door swung shut?

The answer, my dear brother and sister, is obvious to every heart in this room. We all know exactly what we would reach for at the end. And if the answer is that obvious, then there is really only one honest question left: **why are we waiting for that moment to arrive before we act on what we already know?** The intelligent believer does not wait for the departure gate to start packing. He prepares before the journey begins, not after it is far too late to prepare at all.

PREPARING FROM INSIDE YOUR REAL LIFE

You Do Not Need to Climb a Mountain

And here comes the good news, and it is genuinely tremendous news, so lift your heart. Preparing for the Hereafter does not require you to abandon your job, your family, or your home. It does not require you

to retreat to a cave in the mountains. It requires only that you redirect the ordinary hours you are already spending, so that they begin to carry weight on the Day of Judgement. The believer prepares for eternity from within the very life he is already living. The commute you already take can become dhikr. The wealth you already earn can become sadaqah. The parents you already have can become your ticket to Paradise. Nothing extra is being demanded of your time; only a change in where a portion of it points.

So begin with the Book of Allah, the manual itself. Resolve to open the Qur'an every single day, even if it is only a few verses, read slowly with the heart present and followed by a glance at the meaning. A single page a day is three hundred and sixty-five pages in a year, more than half the Qur'an, built one small step at a time. Do not aim for perfection tomorrow; aim for consistency today. Attach it to something you already do, right after Fajr or just before sleep, so it becomes as automatic as reaching for the phone you check without even thinking.

Then guard the five prayers as though your salvation depends on them, because it does. The Prophet ﷺ told us that the first matter the servant will be questioned about on the Day of Judgement is the prayer: if it is sound, the rest of the deeds will be sound, and if it is corrupt, the rest will be corrupt. So do not let the prayer become a rushed formality squeezed between meetings and errands. Pray it at its time, in the masjid where possible for the men, with stillness and presence. Let that sajdah, the moment in which you are nearest to Allah, become the anchor around which your whole day turns.

And keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allah and with istighfar. The Prophet ﷺ, who was already forgiven, would seek forgiveness more than seventy times a day. What then of us, who quietly accumulate sins between one prayer and the next? Let SubhanAllah, Alhamdulillah, La ilaha illa Allah, and Astaghfirullah become the background hum of your commute, your walk, your waiting in every queue. These are the light words the Prophet ﷺ described as heavy on the scale and beloved to the Most Merciful, and they cost you nothing but a moving tongue and a present heart.

THE TWO WINGS THAT CARRY YOU HOME

Between Hope and Fear

As we prepare, my dear brother and sister, we walk a straight path between two dangerous ditches. The first ditch is despair, imagining that our sins are simply too many for Allah to forgive, that the door has already closed, that there is no point in even beginning. And I want to tell you, with everything in me, that this is a lie of Shaytan. Allah declares that He forgives all sins for the one who turns back to Him, and that His mercy encompasses all things. As long as the soul has not reached the throat and the sun has

not risen from the west, the door of repentance stands wide open, waiting for you to walk through it, no matter what you are carrying.

The second ditch is false security, imagining that we can sin freely because Allah is forgiving anyway, forever pushing repentance to a tomorrow that may never come. The believer refuses both ditches and holds both wings in balance: he hopes in the vast mercy of Allah, and he fears falling short before Him, and with these two wings together he flies toward his Lord. Neither wing alone will carry him home. Hope without fear becomes recklessness; fear without hope becomes despair. Together, they become flight.

A REMINDER CARRIED HOME

Small, Steady, and Forever

Before you close this and return to your day, let me leave you with the secret to a life that arrives well prepared, straight from the mouth of the Prophet ﷺ. Because I do not want you to walk away lit on fire today only to be cold again by Thursday. That fire-then-cold pattern is the enemy of everything we have spoken about.

أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ

*The most beloved of deeds to Allah are the **most consistent of them, even if they are few.***

Source: Sahih al-Bukhari: 6464 and Sahih Muslim: 782 · **Authenticity:** Muttafaquun Alayh (agreed upon)

Do you see the mercy in this? Allah is not asking for a heroic explosion of worship that burns out in a week. He is asking for something small that never stops. Do not be the person who prays through every night of Ramadan and then abandons the prayer entirely in Shawwal. Be the person who reads one honest page a day for the rest of their life. Be the person who gives one quiet, regular charity that never dries up. Be the person who honours their parents this evening, and calls the relative they fell out with today, before pride steals another year, because you do not know whether you or they will see next week.

My dear brother, my dear sister, we opened by saying that every soul is on a journey no one escapes. So let us not be among those who spend the whole night redecorating a hotel room they are about to leave.

Let us pack light, keep our hearts turned toward home, and send ahead of us the deeds we will one day be desperate to have. The door is open right now. Right now, before the barrier falls, before kalla is spoken over us, the pen is still in your hand. Write something beautiful with it, today, and keep writing it every day until the journey is complete.

☰ Your Action Plan: Pack for the Journey

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

1 Open the manual every single day

Read at least one page of the Qur'an with the meaning, attached to a habit you already have, such as right after Fajr or just before sleep. Aim for consistency, not perfection.

DAILY

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

2 Anchor your day with one perfect prayer

Pick one of the five prayers and pray it slowly, at its time, with full presence, as if it were your last. Let that sajdah become the still point your whole day turns around.

DAILY

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

3 Keep your tongue moist with dhikr and istighfar

Turn your commute, your walking, and your waiting into SubhanAllah, Alhamdulillah, La ilaha illa Allah, and Astaghfirullah. Light words, heavy on the scale.

DAILY

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

4 Mend one broken bond before it is too late

Call the parent you have neglected or the relative you fell out with, and reconcile today. You do not know whether you or they will see next week.

THIS WEEK

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

🚩 The 7-Day Traveller's Challenge

For the next seven days, live as though you might not see the eighth. Each morning, before you touch your phone, read one page of the Qur'an with its meaning. Each night, before you sleep, seek Allah's forgiveness ten times and ask yourself one honest question: if this were my last day, what did I send ahead? On day three, mend one relationship you have let break. By the end of the week these small deeds will feel less like effort and more like who you are, and that is exactly the point: not a burst that fades, but a light, steady packing for the journey home that never stops 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.