

In partnership with
ISLAMIC RELIEF USA



30

Khawaatir

IN 30 DAYS

A PARENT'S GUIDE

BY: MARWA ALY



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

Marwa Aly is a mother, mentor, chaplain, and teacher. She graduated from the Hartford Theological Seminary and served as a Muslim Chaplain at Manhattanville College, Trinity College, and Wesleyan University. As the Youth Development Manager at the Islamic Center of Passaic County, she helped coordinate programs and empower young women to find confidence in their American Muslim identity. Nothing inspires her more than connecting with like minded individuals who strive to leave a long lasting positive impact in the world.

Assalaamu Alaykum! As a mother of three young children and a Muslim chaplain, I've noticed that there has been a shift in the way Islamic knowledge is being transferred. In the past, we were accustomed to going to the masjid to hear a khutba or lecture, or attend a halaqa. Now, with the wealth of Islamic knowledge readily found online, it's much easier to have our kids listen to a lecture or watch a YouTube clip instead of us taking a more active role in their Islamic education. We are our children's first teachers and this can sometimes feel overwhelming. There are so many resources, how do we even begin? First and foremost, our kids are looking for ways to connect and bond with us. Something that you may view as a simple lesson can have a long lasting impact when it is delivered from you, the person your children most care about pleasing.

This book is a collection of some of my favorite Islamic mini-lessons (KHAWAATIR (pl) khatira (s)) broken down in an easy to follow guide. Each lesson has multiple Asks to help guide the conversation while keeping your children engaged. There is zero prep work on your end! We highly recommend that you deliver it after a specific prayer and stay consistent. That way, kids will associate positive memories with salaah and will look forward to praying in congregation as a family. Please keep in mind that this is meant as a guide; feel free to add more details, verses, and stories if/when you see fit! Please share this book with anyone you think will benefit from it and keep us in your dua.

Sincerely,
Marwa Aly

DAY 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF SALAH

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would tell Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him):

“أرحننا بها يا بلال”

Give us rest with it, oh Bilal.

What was Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) known for and what do you think the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was referring to with this statement?

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the companions would find rest in prayer! Sometimes, you may think of it as a chore, or something you're forced to do because we tell you to do it. But, it's actually meant to relieve us of our day's stress and help us feel a sense of peace while we talk to Allah ﷻ.

Ask: What do you think Allahu Akbar means?

It means Allah ﷻ is not only Great. It means Allah ﷻ is Greater. Adding the -er means that you're comparing something's size to something else. Like big and bigger.

Ask: What do you think Allah ﷻ is greater than?

Allah ﷻ is greater than everything we have going on in our lives. Allah ﷻ is greater than the math test that's coming up. Allah ﷻ is greater than your rumbly tummy. Allah ﷻ is greater than the video game you want to play. Allah ﷻ is greater and more deserving of our time than any chores we need to complete.

When you put your hands up and say “Allahu Akbar,” it's as if you're throwing all of your worries and stress over your back and trusting that Allah ﷻ is there to help carry your burden. And once you put Allah ﷻ as the center of your life, Allah ﷻ will place more blessings in your time, and you'll find that you'll accomplish so much and won't feel as rushed doing it.

سَأَلَتْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ الصَّلَاةُ لَوْ فَتِنَهَا

One day Abdullah ibn Masud (may Allah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which deed is best?

Ask: What do you think the Prophet ﷺ said?

He said, “Praying on time.” Do you think we can try our best as a family to pray on time? What can we do to make sure that happens?

DAY 2: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF 5 BEFORE 5

Remember yesterday when we were discussing how important salah is and we said that Allah ﷻ will put blessings, or baraka, in our time when we put Allah ﷻ first?

Ask: Why do you think our time is so important? Who can tell me a surah from the Qur'an that talks about time?

Yes! Surat al-Asr. A word that is related to asr is 'aseer (عصير). Do you know what 'aseer means?

It's juice! The juice that has literally been squeezed out from fruit. And 'asr is the time of day where the last bits of our day are being squeezed in before maghrib comes and the sun sets.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ told us to take care of five things before five. Do you know what they are?

Okay, let's go through them one by one. The first one is your youth before your old age.

Ask: What does it mean to take advantage of your youth?

[An example is someone who is able-bodied and healthy has more energy to do good deeds]

That's great! The second one is your health before your illness.

Ask: What are some of the blessings that we take for granted when we are healthy? How does it feel when we're sick? Do we have any energy when we're sick?

The third one is to take advantage of your wealth before your poverty.

Ask: What do you think it means to take advantage of your wealth?

[Kids may say to save their money and not buy silly things. Guide them to mention charity and how Allah ﷻ multiplies whatever we give in charity back to us]

The fourth thing we need to take advantage of is our free time before our work. Right now, as kids, you may have a lot more free time than adults. You have less responsibilities, but you may not be using your time wisely.

Ask: What's one way you can make better use of your time?

The last one is to take advantage of your life before your death. On the Day of the Judgment, people will be begging Allah ﷻ to go back to this world for even a day so they can do as much good as possible. By then, it'll be too late. So anything good you can do while you're still alive, make sure to do it to the best of your ability!

Okay, so let's recap! Who can remember the 5 before 5?

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اغْتَنِمِ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ
خَمْسٍ شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سَقَمِكَ وَغِنَاكَ قَبْلَ فُقْرِكَ وَفَرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ
شُغْلِكَ وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ

Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said "Take advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your riches before your poverty, your free time before your work, and your life before your death"

Did you notice that 3 out of the 5 have to do with our time? That's how important our time is and we need to do our best not to waste it!

DAY 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARITY

Let's go around and everyone can say what their favorite food is.

Okay, I'm definitely hungry now! Do you know that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also had a favorite food? Can anyone guess what it is?

It's the lamb shoulder! It tastes so yummy, especially with yogurt and potatoes! One day the Prophet's wife Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was in their home and they had a whole lamb that they gave away to the poor. The only piece of meat from the entire lamb that they kept to eat was the shoulder. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ asked Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) what remained of the lamb. And she said, "Nothing remains except the shoulder piece."

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ corrected her and said, "Everything remains except the shoulder piece."

What do you think the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ meant by that?

Everything we give away for the sake of Allah ﷻ, that is ultimately what will be in our akhira (after life) bank account. And, that doesn't necessarily mean food or money.

Ask: What other things can we give away for the sake of Allah ﷻ?

Yes, we can share our toys and also share our time! What are some ways we can donate our time and talents? (Examples can include helping around the house, reading to a younger sibling, or calling a grandparent)

Can anyone tell me what are some of the benefits of charity?

Charity will give us shade on the Day of Judgment- The Prophet ﷺ said: "The believer's shade on the Day of Resurrection will be his charity." Charity is a form of protection. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Give charity without delay, for it stands in the way of calamity." Allah ﷻ promises to multiply our reward. He says:

مَنْ دَا الَّذِي يُفْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً

"Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?" (Surat al-Baqara, aya 245)

We have the chance to relieve the distress of someone else! How does it feel when you help someone in need?

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، أَنَّهُمْ دَبَحُوا شَاةً فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " مَا بَقِيَ مِنْهَا " . قَالَتْ مَا بَقِيَ مِنْهَا إِلَّا كَتِفُهَا . قَالَ " بَقِيَ كُلُّهَا غَيْرَ كَتِفِهَا " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيْسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ صَحِيحٌ . وَأَبُو مَيْسَرَةَ هُوَ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ اسْمُهُ عَمْرُو بْنُ شُرْحَبِيلٍ

From 'Aishah that they had slaughtered a sheep, so the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "What remains of it?" She said: "Nothing remains of it except its shoulder." He said: "All of it remains except its shoulder," (Sunan al-Tirmidhi).

DAY 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF WUDU'

You know, sometimes I notice that you all hold your wudu for a really long time. Whenever I ask if you have wudu' before you pray, you always say "yes!" MashaAllah, you all must have very strong bladders! I hope that is the case, but if it's not, maybe we should discuss why wudu is so important.

Ask: Who can tell me about Bilal, raadiya Allahu 'anhu?

He was the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ muadhin (person who makes the call to prayer) and he used to be a slave to a very evil man named Umayyah ibn Khalaf. Umayyah would shackle him to the ground in the middle of the hot desert sun and place rocks on his chest to make him renounce Islam. Did Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) ever give up? No! He kept repeating the phrase Ahadun Ahad! (One! One!) declaring the oneness of Allah ﷻ.

Ask: What do you think this story has to do with wudu'?

Well, one day, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was sitting with Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) and he asked him a Ask. He said to him, "Tell me about the most hopeful act (i.e., one which you deem the most rewarding with Allah) you have done since your acceptance of Islam because I heard the sound of the steps of your shoes in front of me in Jannah," (Sahih Bukhari).

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال لبلال:
يا بلال حدثني بأرجى عمل عملته في الإسلام، فإنني سمعت دف نعليك
بين يدي في الجنة، قال: ما عملت عملاً أرجى عندي من أني لم أتطهر
طهوراً في ساعة من ليل أو نهار إلا صليت بذلك الطهور ما كتب لي أن
أصلي. (متفق عليه وهذا لفظ البخاري).

Ask: If you were Bilal, how would you respond?

Maybe you would say, "I never gave up when I was being tortured by that evil man!" Or, "I fought in battles with you, oh Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and that makes me hopeful of Jannah!"

Do you know Bilal's response? He said, "I do not consider any act more hopeful than that whenever I make wudu' (or took a bath) in an hour of night or day, I would immediately perform salaah (prayer) for as long as was destined for me to perform."

Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) was always in a constant state of wudu'! He would follow up his wudu' with praying two extra rakat as a nafilah (voluntary) prayer.

Sometimes, we may think that we can't reach the level of the companions because they were able to fight in battles with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, or because they had opportunities that we do not. But look at Bilal's response! We all can make wudu and take care of our wudu the same way Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) did!

Let's try not to be lazy with our wudu. Our wudu washes away our sins!

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ الْعَبْدُ الْمُسْلِمُ
 أَوْ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَغَسَلَ وَجْهَهُ خَرَجَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ كُلُّ خَطِيئَةٍ نَظَرَ إِلَيْهَا بِعَيْنَيْهِ مَعَ
 الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ يَدَيْهِ خَرَجَ مِنْ يَدَيْهِ كُلُّ خَطِيئَةٍ كَانَتْ
 بَطَشَتْهَا يَدَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ فَإِذَا غَسَلَ رِجْلَيْهِ خَرَجَتْ كُلُّ
 خَطِيئَةٍ مَسَّتْهَا رِجْلَاهُ مَعَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَعَ آخِرِ قَطْرِ الْمَاءِ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ نَفِيًّا مِنْ
 الذُّنُوبِ

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, said, "When a Muslim or a believer washes his face in ablution, every sin that he committed with his eyes will be washed away with the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, every sin that he committed with his hands will be washed away with the last drop of water. When he washes his feet, every sin that he committed with his feet will be washed away with the last drop of water, until he emerges purified from sin," (Sahih Muslim).

And on the Day of Judgment, we will be so happy that we took our time making wudu!

إِنَّ أُمَّتِي يُدْعَوْنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عُرًّا مُحَجَّلِينَ مِنْ أَثَارِ الْوُضُوءِ فَمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ
 مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يُطِيلَ عُرَّتَهُ فَلْيَفْعَلْ

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, said, "Verily, my nation will be called on the Day of Resurrection as brightly radiant from the traces of ablution. Whoever among you is able to extend his radiance, let him do so," (Sahih Muslim).

Don't we want the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to notice us from the light that will be coming out of our faces, and hands and arms because of the wudu we used to make?



DAY 5: THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

Ask: Does anyone know why Allah ﷻ requires us to fast in Ramadan?

It does help us feel how the poor are feeling, but what does Allah ﷻ tell us in the Qur'an?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"Oh you who believe, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may attain taqwa," [Surat al-Baqara aya 183].

Ask: What do you think taqwa means?

Taqwa comes from the root word وقى, wa-qa-ya, which means to shield. We are essentially shielding ourselves from displeasing Allah ﷻ, and that takes a lot of focus!

One day Ubay ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) and Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), were discussing the idea of taqwa and Ubay asked Umar a Ask. He said, "Have you ever taken a thorny path?" Umar replied, "Yes I have." Ubay then asked, "So how did you travel along this thorny path?" Umar replied, "I rolled up my garment and was cautious as to where I would tread to avoid being pricked by the thorns." So Ubay responded and said, "This is Taqwa."

Ask: Why do you think fasting increases our taqwa?

We are usually distracted in our everyday lives, but knowing that we need to refrain from meeting our most basic needs, like eating and drinking, will constantly remind us that we're doing this for the sake of Allah ﷻ .

Ask: Now who can tell me about angels?

Yes! They're made of light and they surround us when we remember Allah ﷻ .

Ask: Do angels eat or drink? Do they need to sleep?

No, they don't need to do any of these things. In Ramadan, we deprive ourselves of food during the day and sleep during the night as we join our family in praying taraweeh. So, this month gives us the opportunity to reach the level of the angels. We have a chance for our souls to be nourished by worshipping our Lord while we have more control over our desires.

Do you know there are so many benefits to fasting? Fasting gives our body time to rest instead of constantly working to digest food. Fasting also helps clean out the toxins in our body. It also helps regulate our blood sugar and repairs the cells in our body There are so many worldly benefits to fasting, and even more importantly, benefits for our akhira! Do you know there is a special door to Jannah for those that fast often? That door is called the Door of Rayaan.

Also, right before you break your fast, you make dua right? Do you know that a fasting person's dua is accepted?

دَتْنَا ابْنُ سَلَامٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ فُضَيْلٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ” مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ “.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, said, “He who fasts Ramadan, due to iman and hoping for reward (from Allah) then his past sins are forgiven,” (Bukhari and Muslim)

Ask: Can anyone tell me, outside of Ramadan, what other times would the Prophet fast?

Mondays and Thursdays of every week, and the 13th, 14th, 15th of the hijri months.

Ask: Does anyone know the fast of Prophet Dawud? How often would he fast? Do you think you could do that?

(Ans. Every other day)



DAY 6: CONTROLLING OUR ANGER

Ask: Have any of you heard the word “hangry” before? Can anyone tell me what it means?

Yes! It means that you have a bad temper because you’re hungry.

Do you feel especially “hangry” in Ramadan? Well, did you know something that will be highly rewarded by Allah ﷻ is if we can control our anger during this blessed month of Ramadan? We are not only fasting from food and drink, but also from lashing out at our family members.

Once a young man approached the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and asked him for some advice. The Prophet ﷺ replied, “Do not become angry,” and he repeated this three times. On another occasion the Prophet ﷺ asked his companions, “Do you know who the strong person is?” His companions replied, “The one who is able to wrestle others down.” The Prophet ﷺ responded, “No, it is the one who is able to control their anger.”

Allah ﷻ and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave us three practical steps we can take when we feel angry. Can you guess what they are?

The first one is to move your position. So if you’re standing, sit down. If you’re sitting down, lay down.

The second one is to make wudu. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Verily, anger comes from Satan and Satan was created from fire. Fire is extinguished with water, so if you become angry then perform wudu with water.”

Can anyone tell me what the third one is?

It is seeking refuge in Allah ﷻ from the Shaytan by saying,

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

I seek refuge with Allah ﷻ from the accursed Shaytan.

Ask: Who can recap the three steps we can take to help us control our anger?



DAY 7: QALBUN SALEEM (A SOUND HEART)

Today our reflection will include a story of a very special man. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was sitting with a group of the companions in the masjid and he said: "A man will now enter (who is) from the people of Paradise."

The man walked in. Later it happened again, and then a third time. One of the companions wanted to find out what was so special about this individual, so he asked the man if he could stay over at his house for three days, making an excuse to stay. The man allowed him to do so. Observing him carefully in his home, the companion noticed that the man didn't do anything out of the ordinary.

He didn't fast all the time, he slept some of the night and prayed some of the night, and so on. So after the three days, the companion told him the real reason why he requested to stay with him, and he asked him what it was that could be the reason why he was from the people of Jannah.

His host couldn't think of anything, but after some time, he said, "Every night, before I go to sleep, I forgive whoever has wronged me. I remove any bad feelings towards anyone from my heart."

Do you think that is an easy thing to do?

Our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reminds us in this hadith:

إِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ. أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ.

"There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good, the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoiled, the whole body gets spoiled and that is the heart."

Part of having a qalbun saleem (healthy heart), is to try to forgive others when they hurt your feelings. Why do you think that's important?

We know that we will make lots of mistakes in our lives, but don't we also want Allah's forgiveness? Allah ﷻ tells us in Surat an-Nur:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ...

"...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful," [Surat an-Nur, aya 22].

In this special month, we are asking Allah ﷻ for His mercy and His forgiveness. Can we try our best to forgive others quickly so Allah ﷻ can be quick to forgive us?

DAY 8: THE LIFE OF THIS WORLD

Do you know that there is an aya in the Qur'an that takes us through all the stages of life and tells us what we find to be the most important aspect based on our age?

This aya is found in the chapter named Al-Hadeed.

Ask: Does anyone know what Hadeed means?

Yes! It means iron! The verse in Surat al Hadeed starts by saying:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

Know that the life of this world is play and amusement.

Ask: When you were really really young what was something that was so important to you?

Yes, playing! You would use your imagination, play with your toys, build legos. That is what لعب la'ibun means. Then you got a bit older and you wanted to hear stories and be entertained.

Ask: Can you tell me what other ways you're entertained? (Examples can include watching tv, reading books, etc)

Yes! This is what is meant by لهو lahwin. Then we get a bit older and our goals change. The aya continues by saying, وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ wa zeenatun wa tafakhirun baynakum. All of a sudden, you become a tween and a teenager, and you really care about your looks. You want to dress in the nicest clothing and look beautiful. This is zeena.

Then you get even older and you enter college. You compete with your classmates and show off your knowledge and skills to impress future employees. This is tafaakhirun baynakum (boasting with one another).

Then what usually happens after college? Work, marriage, and children! The aya continues by saying, وَتَكَاتُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ wa takathur fil amwaali wal-awlaad: and competition in increasing wealth and children.

As parents, we try to give you the best life and education and we work hard to provide for you. But, we always have to remember that it won't be permanent, right?

Ask: We will be so happy like farmers watching our seeds grow into beautiful plants, but what happens in the fall when it's no longer sunny and becomes windy and cold?

Yes, the plants turn yellow. Remember that toy you used to love playing with as a really little kid? Is it as interesting to you anymore? Remember that tv show you could not stop watching? You even memorized all the lines to it? Do you remember the title? Are you interested in something else now?

This is the example of our whole life. Once we get something we were so excited to have, we realize, after some time has passed, that it has "turned yellow" to us.

Ask: What do you think that means?

Yes! It's not as interesting as it once was. So knowing that this is going to happen, how can we make sure to not get distracted by the bright and shiny and stay focused on Allah ﷻ?

We're in luck because Allah ﷻ gives us the answer! Allah ﷻ says:

سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ،

Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and Jannah!

Ask: How do you think we can race towards Allah ﷻ?

DAY 9: A GOOD WORD IS LIKE A GOOD TREE

I want you all to close your eyes and think of a beautiful tree.

Ask: Who can tell me what their tree looks like? Is the tree big and strong? Does it have lots of branches and leaves? Does it have fruit?

Now, I want you to think of a time when someone said something really nice to you.

Ask: What are some of the nice statements you remember people telling you?

Ask: How did those statements make you feel?

Yes, they fill us up with a warm feeling. We may have felt proud of ourselves and we may have felt loved. Do you know that Allah ﷻ describes a good word to a good tree?

In Surat Ibrahim, Allah ﷻ says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ (٢٤) تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded. (Surat Ibrahim, ayaat 24-25)

Ask: Now, I want you to think of a time where someone said something mean to you. How did that make you feel? It's not fun to remember the mean stuff right? Allah ﷻ continues in Surat Ibrahim and says:

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِن فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِن قَرَارٍ

And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability. (Surat Ibrahim, aya 26)

What do you think are good words we can use to build strong, firmly rooted trees?

What about saying, "La illah illa Allah, Muhammad rasool Allah?" Why do you think that would be important?

DAY 10: DUA OF UMM SALAMA

Today I'm going to share with you a story of a very important woman in Islamic history named Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her). She is a female companion which means she is a sahaabiya (female companion).

Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) was one of the first people to embrace Islam and she was one of the few Muslims who actually performed the hijrah twice.

Ask: Who can tell me what a hijrah is?

A hijrah is when someone leaves a place they are in for the sake of Allah ﷻ. The first hijrah was to Ethiopia, where a just Christian ruler named Najashi, took in a group of Muslims and took good care of them.

So Umm Salama and Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with them) went to Ethiopia. After some time living there, they really wanted to go back to Mecca so they can be next to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and learn everything about Islam. As they waited patiently, news traveled all the way to Africa saying that the Muslims were no longer getting persecuted because Umar ibn al-Khattab and Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, had embraced Islam.

Umm Salama and Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with them) decided to return back to Mecca and when they did, they realized that it was only a rumor and the Muslims were still getting tortured by Quraysh. So, when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ instructed all the Muslims of Mecca to leave to Madina for the second hijrah, they wasted no time getting ready.

Ask: Do you see how they were so active and didn't take their Islam for granted?

As Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) is about to mount her camel, her tribe, the Banu Makhzum, come and tell Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with him) that they are not allowing him to take Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) to Madina.

Then Abu Salama's tribe, the Banu Asad, take Salama, his child, away. Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with him) cannot defend himself against all of these men, so he sets off to Madina.

In one day Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) loses her husband and her child and she suffers so much because of it. She is in a lot of pain. After some time her cousin starts to feel sorry for her and speaks to the tribes. He is able to reunite her with her son. After a year of waiting, Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) is finally able to meet her husband in Madina.

Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with him) was known as a very caring husband and courageous man. He fought in the Battle of Badr as well as the Battle of Uhud. In Uhud, he received a wound that he wasn't able to recover from.

Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) was so sad the day Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with him) died but the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught her a beautiful dua. He taught her to say:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أَجْرَنِي فِي مَصِيبَتِي وَأُخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

"We belong to Allah and to Allah is our return. Oh Allah, reward me for my calamity, and replace my loss with something better."

Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) said this dua, but in her mind she thought, "Who can be better than Abu Salama (may Allah be pleased with him)?"

After a few months passed, Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) proposed to Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) and she said no.

Then Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) proposed to Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) and she also said no.

Then, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ proposed to Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) and she accepted. So now, she was not only the mother of Salama, but the mother of all of the believers until the end of time!



DAY 11: GRATITUDE

Ask: Let's all go around and state a few things we're grateful for. Those are all really great! Alhamdulillah for all of those!

Ask: Do you know what the opposite of shukr, or showing thanks, is? It's actually the word kufr (unbelief). Sometimes, we complain so much that we hide all the good that Allah ﷻ has given us and we only see the hardships.

Allah ﷻ wants us to stay grateful for everything He has given us. Our health, our family, our talents, and most importantly, our religion. Allah ﷻ reminds us in the Qur'an:

طَوِّدْ تَأْتِيَنَّ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]...'" (Surat Ibrahim, aya 7).

When Allah ﷻ tells us, "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you," He leaves the increase open-ended.

Allah ﷻ can give us more in what we thank Him for. He can also give us more appreciation and awareness of the blessings He has granted us.

Did you know that saying alhamdulillah (all praise is due to Allah) and showing gratitude actually changes the way our brains are shaped, inside our heads? People who show gratitude on a daily basis end up feeling happier too!

When Allah ﷻ blew Adam's soul into him, Adam responded by sneezing, and he said: alhamdulillah (all praise is due to Allah). That was the first word that was ever uttered by a human being.

And do you know what the last word will be?

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ طَوِّدْ وَفُضِي بَيْنَهُمْ
بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"And you will see the angels surrounding the Throne, exalting [Allah] with praise of their Lord. And it will be judged between them in truth, and it will be said, "[All] praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds,"" (Surat az-Zumar, aya 75).

Isn't that amazing? We begin and end with praising and thanking Allah ﷻ.

Allah ﷻ reminds us in the Qur'an:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful," (Surat an-Nahl, aya 18).

Ask: Even though we won't be able to list all of Allah's ﷻ favors, can each of you think of at least 10?

DAY 12: PROPHET MUSA (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND OVERCOMING FEAR

I want you to close your eyes and think of a moment when you were afraid.

Ask: How did you feel? Did you feel like running away? Does anyone want to share that moment with us now?

Did you know that the Prophets also felt scared sometimes?

Ask: Can anyone tell me a time when a Prophet was scared?

There was a time when Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) saw a fire in the distance and he went to see if there was anyone there because he was lost with his family. There, he spoke to Allah ﷻ! Allah ﷻ asked him about his staff and told him to throw it down.

Ask: Does anyone know what happened when Musa (peace be upon him) threw down the staff?

Yes! It became a snake! How did Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) react when it became a slithering snake? He ran away! He was so scared!

Allah ﷻ told him not to be scared, that Allah ﷻ would return it back to its original form- a staff.

A little while later, Allah ﷻ tells Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) to go and speak to Pharaoh. Now, we know Pharaoh is one of the worst humans to ever live. He did very evil things and treated the people of Israel very poorly. Musa (peace be upon him) was scared to speak to Pharaoh. But Allah ﷻ calmed his fears and told him that He ﷻ is with him and Prophet Harun. This helps Musa feel calm when he meets Pharaoh.

After he meets Pharaoh and the magicians become Muslim, Musa (peace be upon him) takes Bani Israel (the Children of Israel) with him and they escape from the clutches of Pharaoh and his soldiers until they see the Red Sea. Now, Bani Israel start to lose hope. They say, "إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ" (We will surely be overtaken!)

Ask: How do you think Musa (peace be upon him) responds?

Musa sees Pharaoh and his soldiers galloping at great speed about to attack him and his people, and instead of being afraid and running away he says,

كَأَلَّا إِن مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِين

"No! Indeed, I have my Lord, He will guide me!" [26:62]

And that's when Musa strikes his staff, Allah ﷻ parts the Red Sea and saves the Children of Israel from the clutches of Pharaoh and his men!

Ask: What was the journey that Musa took with his fear?

First his fear was a physical response, and he runs away from the snake. Then he feels fear inside his heart- he is so worried about confronting Pharaoh. But he notices, without fail, Allah ﷻ is always there to guide him and help. So, when the Children of Israel feel afraid, Musa knows to feel assured and confident that Allah ﷻ is on his side. Every time you feel afraid, remember that Allah ﷻ is always with you. He (swt) hears and sees everything.

DAY 13: ADAM (PEACE BE UPON HIM) AND THE SHAYTAN

Adam (peace be upon him) and Shaytan both made mistakes. But one is going to be rewarded and the other punished.

Ask: Can anyone tell me the mistake that Adam (peace be upon him) and Hawa made?

Yes! They ate from a tree that Allah told them not to eat from. What did they do after they made a mistake? They asked Allah ﷻ to forgive them. They said:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers,” (7:23).

Alhamdulillah, Allah ﷻ accepted their tawba (repentance) and forgave them.

Ask: What sin did the Shaytan commit?

Yes, he refused to bow down to Adam (peace be upon him) even though Allah ﷻ commanded him to do so. When Allah ﷻ asked him why he refused to bow down, Shaytan responded by saying:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ

I am better than him. You created me from fire and you created him from clay (Surat al Aaraaf, aya 12).

Ask: What do we call someone who thinks they are better than someone else because of their skin color, or the language they speak?

Ask: Did Shaytan ask Allah ﷻ to forgive him?

No, instead he promises that he will try his very best to lead those that believe in Allah ﷻ on the wrong path. What trait is that called- when you know you did something wrong but you refuse to ask for forgiveness?

Shaytan is arrogant in front of Allah ﷻ, while Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) knows that every blessing he has is due to Allah's ﷻ generosity. Do you see the difference between the two? As long as we continue coming back to Allah ﷻ, we need to have firm faith that Allah ﷻ will forgive us. Let's read this beautiful Hadith Qudsi together:

قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ ، إِنَّكَ مَا دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي ، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي . يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ : لَوْ بَلَغَتْ ذُنُوبُكَ عَنَانَ السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْفَرْتَنِي ، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ . يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ : إِنَّكَ لَوْ أَتَيْتَنِي بِقُرَابِ الْأَرْضِ خَطَايَا ثُمَّ لَقَيْتَنِي لَا تُشْرِكُ بِي شَيْئًا ، لَأَتَيْتُكَ بِقُرَابِهَا مَغْفِرَةً

“I heard the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ say: Allah the Almighty has said: “O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.”

So let's never lose hope in the mercy of Allah ﷻ and remember to turn back to him when we sin or make mistakes.

DAY 14: MAKING OUR INTENTIONS BIG!

Have any of you heard the phrase:

إنما الأعمال بالنية

Innamal 'amaalu bi-niyyaat?

Ask: Does anyone know what it means?

It means actions are judged by their intentions.

Ask: What does it mean to intend something? Do you need to say your intention out loud?

An intention is something you feel internally- it is the "why" behind your actions.

Ask: Do you think we always make intentions behind the things we do?

If we really tried to make an intention behind every small thing, it would probably cause us some frustration. Most of our actions are done out of habit anyway- like making our beds, brushing our teeth, and making our meals. But, what if we started to be more intentional with the way we operated? What good do you think could come out of it?

Maybe we wouldn't be so quick to lose our temper. Maybe we could get even more hasanat for transforming our ordinary chores into extraordinary acts of worship!

One day, Imam ash-Shafi', a great scholar of Islam, may Allah ﷻ be pleased with him, had some students over his house when they heard someone knock on the door. One of his students went to answer the door, and Imam ash-Shafi' stopped him and asked him what he was doing.

"I'm going to answer the door," the student replied.

Imam ash-Shafi' said, "Before you answer the door, make the intention that if it is a poor person seeking help, you will give them charity. And if it is a guest, you will host them."

Something as simple as answering the door became a way to get lots of rewards! How? Well, whenever we make a good intention, we get the reward for it even if we are unable to do it, that's how generous Allah ﷻ is and Allah ﷻ can reward a good intention up to 700 times!

I want each of you to pick something ordinary that you always do and make your intentions very big behind it! (A parent can give an example of washing the dishes- "Intend to have a clean home, intend to make dhikr while washing the dishes, intend to have clean plates and utensils for us to be nourished and well fed so we can be healthy and remember Allah ﷻ and His blessings etc.)

Who wants to share?

DAY 15: MARYAM AND ZAKARIYA

Who can tell me who Maryam (peace be upon her) is?

Yes, she is the mother of 'Isa (peace be upon him), and also the best woman to ever live. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an that He chose her over all the women in the world.

Ask: Do you know that she is also the niece to a Prophet? Does anyone know her uncle's name?

His name is Zakariya (peace be upon him), good job! Do you know that Prophet Zakariya (peace be upon him) was actually inspired by something he saw in Maryam's (peace be upon her) room? It's unusual for adults to admit that they learn from younger people, but we actually do, all the time!

One day, Prophet Zakariya (peace be upon him) went inside Maryam's (peace be upon her) room and he saw fruit that was out of season.

Ask: Can anyone tell me what fruit would be out of season in the spring, but we love to eat it in the summertime? Can we get that same fruit in the wintertime?

Well, Maryam (peace be upon her) would get fruit that was supposed to only grow in the summer during the wintertime too! This was a gift that Allah ﷻ would give her. Zakariya (peace be upon him) was so amazed by this! He asked Maryam (peace be upon her) how she came upon the fruit and she replied:

هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

"It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without measure," (Surat Aal 'Imran, aya 37).

Now, by this time, Zakariya (peace be upon him) is very old. And when you get to be very old, it is very unusual to have any more children. Zakariya (peace be upon him) and his wife never had any children at all. But, he is so inspired by what his niece says that he raises his hands in dua and asks Allah ﷻ for a child. Even though having a child seems impossible because it is "out of season" for Prophet Zakariya (peace be upon him) he asks anyway knowing that Allah ﷻ can grant us anything- even if it is not "in season!"

Ask: Did Allah ﷻ answer Prophet Zakariya's (peace be upon him) dua?

Yes! Prophet Zakariya (peace be upon him) is blessed with Yahya (peace be upon him) who becomes a Prophet and is the cousin of Prophet 'Isa (peace be upon him)!

This shows us that it's never too late or too early to ask for what our heart desires. Maybe Allah ﷻ will grant you something that is out of season too!

DAY 16: THE BEST OF YOU

I want you all to think about your closest friends and how you treat them.

Ask: Would anyone like to share how they try to treat their closest friends?

That's wonderful! You try to be thoughtful and considerate of their feelings. You bring snacks to share with them, you may buy or make them a gift.

Ask: Now, I want you to close your eyes and think of the way that you treat your family members. Is it the same?

Ask: Why do you think that there is a difference between the way we treat our friends and the way we may treat our siblings or parents?

Yes, we do spend a lot of time together. We see each other when we're cranky or frustrated. Sometimes we want our own space to think or we don't want someone interfering with our things. Those are all valid reasons. But, do you know that it is more beloved to Allah that you treat your family members better than you even treat your friends?

It's true! In a hadith, "Aisha (peace be upon her) reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي وَإِذَا مَاتَ صَاحِبُكُمْ فَدَعُوهُ

"The best of you are the best to their families, and I am the best to my family."

Ask: What are some ways we can be the best to our family members? I'm going to share with you a hadith that may help you get some ideas:

وعن أبي أمامه الباهلي رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "أنا زعيم بببيت في ربض الجنة لمن ترك المراء، وإن كان محققاً، وببيت في وسط الجنة لمن ترك الكذب، وإن كان مازحاً، وببيت في أعلى الجنة لمن حسن خلقه" (حديث صحيح رواه أبو داود بإسناد صحيح).

"I guarantee a house in Jannah (Paradise) for one who gives up arguing, even if he is in the right; and I guarantee a house in the middle of Jannah for one who abandons lying even for the sake of fun; and I guarantee a house in the highest part of Jannah for one who has good manners."

If we work on these three things- less arguing, no lying, and good manners, alongside all of your other suggestions, we will be rewarded with Jannah, inshaAllah!

Ask: Do you think we can all work hard to be the best to our family members?

DAY 17: HAJAR AND HER SAI'

Ask: Can anyone tell me the steps we have to take when we perform umrah or the hajj portion in Mecca?

Yes! We have to make tawaaf around the Ka'ba, and walk/jog between the Marwa and Safa and drink from zam zam and shave or cut our hair.

Ask: Do you know who we're emulating when we walk/jog between the Marwa and Safa?

Hajar (peace be upon her) was a noble woman who was also the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and the mother of Prophet Isma'il (peace be upon him). One day, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was instructed by Allah ﷻ to leave his wife and baby in the barren desert. There were no people there, no water, no animals- it was completely deserted. Hajar (peace be upon her) asked Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him): "Did Allah command you to do this?"

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) replied, "Yes." She said, "Then certainly, He will not abandon us."

After a while, Hajar's milk started to run out and so did her food. Baby Isma'il (peace be upon him) was crying and crying out of thirst and hunger. Out of Hajar's desperation, she starts running between the Marwa and Safa, climbing to the very top of each hill and looking to see if anyone is there to help her and her baby.

After Hajar (peace be upon her) jogs between the two hills seven times, the Angel Jibril (peace be upon him) strikes the ground where Baby Isma'il (peace be upon him) is crying and out gushes zam zam water that is still quenching the thirst and healing Muslims until today!

Do you know the Arabic word for what Hajar (peace be upon her) was doing?

It's called sai' (to pursue, endeavor, to strive). When we are putting in our utmost effort, sometimes, we won't see the fruits of our labor directly. Hajar (peace be upon her) did not see the zam zam gush out on the hilltop. Rather, Allah ﷻ told Angel Jibril (peace be upon him) to strike the ground near Prophet Isma'il's body. However, Hajar's effort is not lost with Allah ﷻ. She had firm faith that Allah ﷻ would not abandon them and Allah ﷻ rewarded and protected them. They were now in charge of the zam zam water, birds soon came to drink from it, and people soon followed. This once barren desert is where millions of people go to perform hajj and umrah every single year.

Ask: I want you all to think of what your sai' for the sake of Allah ﷻ looks like. Do you feel like you are striving to please Allah ﷻ? When we look back at our family's sai', will we be proud of it?

Sometimes, we find ourselves only focusing on getting the zam zam but we don't want to put in the hard work that it takes to get there. So, every time you are struggling with a new idea, or doing a chore you don't really want to do, or getting into the habit of learning how to read Qur'an and pray extra prayers, remember that this is all a part of your sai' and Allah ﷻ will actually thank you for it, can you believe it?!

Yes! Allah ﷻ says in Surat al-Israa':

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

“Whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it while he is a believer - it is those whose striving is ever appreciated [by Allah],” [Surat al-Israa’, aya 19].

As we figure out what we want our sai’ to look like, let’s not forget to also ask Allah ﷻ for His generous help! We may be surprised at the zam zam that will gush forth, insha’Allah!

DAY 18: WHEN THE ANGELS SURROUND US

Do you know everytime we sit together and remember Allah ﷻ we are not alone in our meeting? We have very special visitors. These visitors love to hear us praising Allah and thanking Him.

Ask: Who can tell me who these visitors are?

Yes! They are angels! Can anyone name some angels for me?

We have Angel Jibril (peace be upon him) who has delivered every message to every Prophet since the beginning of time. And we have our angels on our left and right who write down our deeds.

Ask: Does anyone know the name of the angel that is in control of the weather?

His name is Angel Mikai’l.

There are so many gifts that Allah ﷻ grants us when we gather together and remember him. Four things happen every single time! I want you to pay close attention to the hadith because I’m going to ask you what those four things are after I read it.

Are you ready?

لا يقعد قوم يذكرون الله عز وجل إلا حفتهم الملائكة، وغشيتهم الرحمة“
ونزلت عليهم السكينة، وذكرهم الله فيمن عنده“.

The Prophet Muhammad said, “When a group of people assemble for the remembrance of Allah, the angels surround them (with their wings), (Allah’s) mercy envelops them, tranquility descends upon them, and Allah makes a mention of them before those who are near Him.”

Ask: Can you believe that Allah ﷻ makes mention of your name when you make mention of His? What do you think it means when “tranquility descends upon us?” Do you feel how calm your heart is?

That is a gift from Allah ﷻ and He tells us that our hearts find rest in His remembrance:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“UnAskably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured,” [Surat ar-Raad, aya 28].

DAY 19: MY MERCY ENCOMPASSES ALL THINGS

We say: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ : Bismillah Ar-Rahman ar-Raheem a lot, right? It means in the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

We say it when we pray, before we eat, we're encouraged to say it before we begin any new task. But do we really understand what "Rahma (mercy) means?

Ask: What do you think Rahma (mercy) means?

Do you know that the word rahma (mercy) comes from the root word, رحم, rahim, which means womb?

Ask: Who can tell me what a womb is?

That's right. A baby is usually in their mommy's womb for 40 weeks. The baby gets all the nourishment it requires - the temperature in the womb is perfect, the nutrients are always administered, it is safe and warm. All the baby has to do is grow and alhamdulillah all its needs are being met.

Ask: How do you think the womb relates to Allah's mercy?

Allah's mercy is constantly surrounding us like a safety net. That doesn't mean that we'll never experience any pain, but Allah ﷻ is constantly showing us mercy with every breath we take. Even blinking is a mercy from Allah ﷻ that we don't even have to think about. Allah ﷻ even has more mercy for us than a mother has for her own child!

حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ أَبِي مَرْيَمَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو غَسَّانَ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي زَيْدُ بْنُ أَسْلَمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَدِمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَبِيًّا، فَإِذَا امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ السَّبْيِ قَدْ تَحْلُبُ نَدْيَهَا تَسْقِي، إِذَا وَجَدَتْ صَبِيًّا فِي السَّبْيِ أَخَذَتْهُ فَأَلْصَقَتْهُ بِبَطْنِهَا وَأَرْضَعَتْهُ، فَقَالَ لَنَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "أَتَرُونَ هَذِهِ طَارِحَةً وَلَدَهَا فِي النَّارِ". قُلْنَا لَا وَهِيَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَى أَنْ لَا تَطْرَحَهُ. فَقَالَ "اللَّهُ أَرْحَمُ بِعِبَادِهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ بَوْلِدِهَا".

One day the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was walking with a group of his companions and they passed by a woman who was frantically looking for her child. She would take any child to her breast and try to feed him/her. Then the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said to the companions: "Do you think that this lady can throw her son in the fire?" We replied, "No, if she has the power not to throw it (in the fire)." The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Allah is more merciful to His slaves than this lady to her son."

And guess what? There's even more mercy in the hereafter than we're experiencing right now.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِائَةَ رَحْمَةٍ كُلُّ رَحْمَةٍ طِبَاقٍ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَحْمَةً فَبِهَا تَعْطِفُ الْوَالِدَةُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا وَالْوَحْشُ وَالطَّيْرُ بَعْضُهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْمَلَهَا بِهَذِهِ الرَّحْمَةِ

Salman al-Farisi reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Verily, on the day Allah created the heavens and earth, He created one hundred parts of mercy. Each part can fill what is between heaven and earth. He made one part of mercy for the earth, from it a mother has compassion for her child, animals and birds have compassion for each other. On the Day of Resurrection, He will perfect this mercy," (Sahih Muslim).

99 parts of mercy on the Day of Judgment! That is one reason why it's so important to have a good opinion of Allah ﷻ! Allah ﷻ even tells us in Surat al 'Araf:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

"My mercy encompasses all things," (Surat al Araf, aya 156).

And you all, my dears, are encompassed by Allah's mercy, alhamdulillah.



DAY 20: COME TO SUCCESS

Whenever we hear the adhan (call to prayer), there is a part where the mu'adhin (person calling the athan) calls out, "حي على الصلاة" hay 'ala as-salaah (come to prayer). Then he says, "حي على الفلاح" - hay 'ala al-falaah."

Ask: Does anyone know what hay 'ala al-falaah means?

It means come to prayer, come to success. Is that how we usually think of success?

Ask: What's your definition of success?

Yes, sometimes we think having a good job, a nice house, a loving family are the measurements of our success. There may be some truth to that for this world- but how does Allah ﷻ measure our success?

Do you know that there is a surah in the Qur'an called, "The Believers," (Al-Mu'minin) and Allah promises that the believers will be successful? He says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"Indeed, the believers have attained success," (Surat al-Mu'minin, aya 1).

Let's dig a little deeper into the Arabic word for success- فلاح (falaah). Do you know that a derivative of that word فلاح (fallaah) means a farmer?

Ask: What are some of the things that a farmer needs to do everyday?

Farmers need to fertilize their soil, plant seeds, pull out weeds, protect their plants from predators, water their crops. Do you think that's a lot of work? Do you think it's easy to be a farmer? I want you to imagine a time when farmers couldn't turn on a hose to water their plants. They completely relied on rain to irrigate their crops. So, they could do all of this hard work, but if there was a drought, their crops wouldn't be able to survive. To be a farmer requires a deep sense of تَوَكَّل (tawakkul) (reliance on Allah).

So, part of success is hard work and a big part is also knowing that nothing happens without the will of Allah ﷻ. That's why when the muadhin (person calling the athan) tells us to come to salaah (prayer) and to come to success, we respond by saying,

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

"There is no power nor strength except by Allah." We could only come to prayer and we can only achieve success if Allah wills it. The only thing in our control is the amount of effort we exert in the process.

So, let's be farmers- let's try our best to plant good seeds, water them, nourish them, and pray that Allah ﷻ places baraka (blessings) in our efforts!

And guess what? There's even more mercy in the hereafter than we're experiencing right now.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِائَةَ رَحْمَةٍ كُلُّ رَحْمَةٍ طَبَاقٌ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَحْمَةً فِيهَا تَعْطِفُ الْوَالِدَةُ عَلَى وَلَدِهَا وَالْوَحْشُ وَالطَّيْرُ بَعْضُهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَكْمَلَهَا بِهَذِهِ الرَّحْمَةِ

Salman al-Farisi reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Verily, on the day Allah created the heavens and earth, He created one hundred parts of mercy. Each part can fill what is between heaven and earth. He made one part of mercy for the earth, from it a mother has compassion for her child, animals and birds have compassion for each other. On the Day of Resurrection, He will perfect this mercy," (Sahih Muslim).

99 parts of mercy on the Day of Judgment! That is one reason why it's so important to have a good opinion of Allah ﷻ! Allah ﷻ even tells us in Surat al 'Araaf:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

"My mercy encompasses all things," (Surat al Araaf, aya 156).

And you all, my dears, are encompassed by Allah's mercy, alhamdulillah.



DAY 21: THE STRONG BELIEVER

Ask: Who can tell me a strong believer during the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ?

Yes! There are so many of them, like Umar, Hamza, Khalid ibn Walid, az-Zubayr ibn Awwaam, Nusaibah, and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them).

Before Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) became Muslim, the Muslims would not pray publicly in front of the Ka'ba. They would be beaten and hurt if they attempted to do so. But, when Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) became Muslim, he went directly in front of the Ka'ba to pray. When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ commanded the Muslims to perform the hijrah (migration from Mecca to Medina), many Muslims did so at night so as not to be seen by the Qurayshi tribes that wanted to keep them in Mecca. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) on the other hand, declared his migration and threatened anyone that attempted to stop him. Abdallah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

"Umar's submission to Islam was a conquest, his migration was a victory, his khalifa (period of rule) was a blessing, I have seen when we were unable to pray at the Ka'ba until Umar submitted, when he submitted to Islam, he fought them (the pagans) until they left us alone and we prayed."

There is a phrase in the Qur'an where Allah ﷻ commands Prophet Musa (peace be upon him) and Prophet Yahya (peace be upon him) to take the book with determination- **فَخَذَهَا بِقُوَّةٍ** fa khuth-ha bi quwwa (take it with power) .

Ask: What do you think it means to take the book with determination, or with power?

While the Qur'an is definitely a book that is soothing for our souls, it's also supposed to empower us and strengthen us, so we can then go forth and empower others by it as well.

When we practice what is in the Qur'an, it allows us to remain upright and builds our spiritual muscles as well. Just like you have to train to grow your physical muscles, you have to keep training for spiritual muscles too.

Ask: What are some ways we can train our spiritual muscles?



DAY 22: YOUR COMPANIONSHIP, OH MESSENGER OF ALLAH?

One of the beautiful blessings of Islam is that once we become Muslim, we inherit an international family, our Muslim ummah. We are all brothers and sisters in Islam, and yet our souls will gravitate to some people while not feeling a very strong connection with others.

Ask: I want each person to go around and tell me who your best friend is and tell me why you feel so close to them.

Did you know that on the Day of Judgment, there will be seven groups of people who will be shaded on the day there is no shade? One of those groups are two people who loved each other for the sake of Allah ﷻ.

Ask: Does anyone know who the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ best friend was?

Yes, Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq. One of my absolute favorite parts of the seerah is when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, is preparing to leave Mecca and perform the hijrah to Madina. This is an extremely dangerous time for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ because all of the Qurayshi tribes have decided that they are going to assassinate him. He knocks on his best friend's door and immediately Abu Bakr, who has been preparing and hoping for this moment asks the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

”الصَّحْبَةَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟“

Your companionship, oh Messenger of Allah?

When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ responds in the affirmative, Abu Bakr starts crying tears of joy. He is so happy to accompany the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on this extremely dangerous, but blessed journey.

When I think of the love that the companions had for one another, I pray that all of you get to experience this love for the sake of Allah ﷻ as well. Even before the Ansar (Muslims of Madina) meet the Muhaajirun (Muslims from Mecca), they are ready to give them their money, food, and shelter in order to help them. Allah ﷻ says about the Ansar:

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۗ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

”And [also for] those who were settled in al-Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be successful,” [Surat al Hashr, aya 9].

It is one of the most cherished gifts that Allah ﷻ can give each and every one of you.

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَىٰ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا وَشَدَّكَ أَصَابِعُهُ

The Prophet Muhammad said, “The believers (in their mutual support) are like a structure, parts of which support other parts,” and he interlaced his fingers, [Sahih Bukhari].

DAY 23: NAFSI NAFSI

In Ramadan, the devils are chained but we may still do things that we're not proud of. Why do you think that is?

There is something inside of us called our nafs (soul). Our nafs is very important. It helps us survive- some translate it as our "self" or our "ego." And while our nafs is very important, it is also important to keep it in check. Sometimes our nafs only wants to eat junk food all day and play video games. Sometimes, it wants to gossip about others, lose its temper, and hoard all the blessings that Allah ﷻ has given it. Other times it feels really guilty and wants to seek Allah's forgiveness. Do you know that Allah ﷻ actually describes three types of nafs in the Qur'an?

Ask: Does anyone know what they are?

The first one is **النَّفْسَ لَأْمَارَةً بِالسُّوءِ**- An-nafsa la-ammaara bis-su' (12:53)- which is the nafs that commands us to sin.

Ask: Can someone describe some of the actions that this nafs would want us to do?

Yes, it will tell us to sleep in, be angry, be jealous, show off etc.etc. We have to work really hard to tame those desires and it will be a lifetime journey to get there, but with Allah's help, we will be able to do it, inshaAllah!

Ask: Can anyone tell me what the next type of nafs is?

It is **النَّفْسِ اللَّوَامَةِ**- An-nafsin lawwaama (75:2)- Allah ﷻ swears by this nafs in Surat al-Qiyaamah. This nafs is the one that scolds us when we do something wrong. In adult words it is "self-reproaching." You may feel this sometimes. You may have heard of it as a "guilty conscience" and it causes a lot of discomfort in your heart. Allah ﷻ is placing that feeling in your heart to help you stay away from committing those sins again. It may feel like shame, or embarrassment. Make sure to listen to this conscience all the time, but with everything, there needs to be a balance. Sometimes we feel so guilty and ashamed that we never try to do anything else, and Allah ﷻ does not want that from us either.

Ask: The third type of nafs found in the Qur'an is found in one of my favorite surahs. It's found in Surat al-Fajr. Can anyone guess what it is?

Yes! It's **النَّفْسِ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ**- al-nafsul mutma'inah. Who can recite the ayat for me?

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

"[To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]," (Surat al-Fajr, ayat 27-28).

This is ultimately where we want to be. This nafs is content with what Allah ﷻ has ordained for it. It is a nafs that has been trained and disciplined to only desire what makes Allah ﷻ happy. And it feels happy doing it as well! It feels a sense of peace and serenity.

What are some ways we can get to this level of peace and serenity inside ourselves?

Allah ﷻ gives us a lot of guidance on how to train our nafs. In Surat ash-Shams, Allah ﷻ swears by the sun, the moon, the day, the night, the sky, the earth, the soul, that the one who is successful is the one that purifies their nafs. You know, when Allah ﷻ swears by something, what follows is very very important? So imagine Allah ﷻ swearing by all of these things to then tell us about purifying our nafs. That means it is one of our ultimate objectives.

Ask: What are some ways we can purify our inner selves?



DAY 24: ISTIGHFAR

After we pray, we are encouraged to make istighfar.

Ask: Who can tell me what istighfar means?

Yes, it's asking forgiveness from Allah ﷻ. But wait, we just prayed.

Ask: So why are we asking for forgiveness after praying?

That's true. We may have made mistakes in our prayer. But should we make istighfar only when we make a mistake or sin?

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, would constantly make istighfar. He would make istighfar at least 100 times a day and he was sinless! Can you believe that?

Yes, we make istighfar for Allah ﷻ to forgive us, but that's not the only benefit, even though it's a big one! Istighfar actually strengthens us. It comes from the word ghafara, which means to cover up. On the Day of Judgement, we want Allah ﷻ to cover up all our sins and completely erase them from our book.

When Prophet Nuh (peace be upon him) , would talk to his people and invite them to seek forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, do you know how they responded?

They would stick their fingers in their ears! And they would cover themselves with their clothing, like they wanted to hide away! But Prophet Nuh (peace be upon him) never gives up! He would tell them to seek forgiveness both in public and in private. He continued doing this for 950 years! He cares about them so much and Allah ﷻ reminds us in Surat Nuh that istighfar doesn't only help us in the hereafter, but also in this world too! Pay close attention to these verses and count how many blessings Allah ﷻ promises us when we make istighfar:

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا (١٠) يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا (١١)
وَيُمِدِّدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا

And said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers, [Surat Nuh 10-12].

Do you want to know the best dua we can say for forgiveness? Let's say it together:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ
مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ
بِدُنْيِي، فَاعْفِرْ لِي، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

Allahumma anta rabbi la ilaha illa anta, khalaqtani wa-ana 'abduk, wa-ana 'ala 'ahdika wawa'dika mas-tata't, a'oothu bika min sharri ma sana't, aboo-o laka bini'matika 'alay, wa-aboo-o bithanbee, faghfir lee fa-innahu la yaghfiru-thunaba illa ant.

"O Allah! You are my Lord. There is no true God except You. You have created me, and I am Your slave, and I hold to Your Covenant as far as I can. I seek refuge in You from the evil of what I have done. I acknowledge the favours that You have bestowed upon me, and I confess my sins. Pardon me, for none but You has the power to pardon."



DAY 25: LOVING THE BELOVED

Can anyone tell me what happened during the year of sadness in our Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ life?

Yes, it is the year the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, and Khadija, his beloved wife, passed away. These two people are extremely dear to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Abu Talib is the chieftain of the Hashemite tribe and he promises our beloved Prophet protection. This protection allows him to continue preaching Islam even under the harshest circumstances. Once Abu Talib dies, Abu Lahab, an arch enemy of Islam, becomes the new leader and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, can no longer rely on any tribal protection. His external protection is gone and the internal comfort he finds in Khadija is also gone. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, would say that he was "nourished by the love of Khadija." His wife of 25 years, his biggest advocate and supporter, the first one to embrace Islam, has died. It is so hard on the Prophet, that it takes him a long time to even smile again, and the Prophet ﷺ was known for his beautiful smile that was more radiant than the moon.

Our Messenger ﷺ needs to find protection outside of Mecca, which forces him to explore other areas, like Ta'if. When he goes there, however, he is completely humiliated. For ten days, the Prophet speaks to one chief after another. None give him a word of encouragement. The worst responses come from three brothers who shout at him: "I would tear the robes of the Ka'ba, if it is true that God has chosen you as His Messenger!" The second one says, "Has God found no one other than you to be His Messenger? The third says, "By God, I will never speak to you. If it is true that you are God's Messenger, you are too great for me to speak to you. If, on the other hand, you are lying, you are not worth answering," (Salahi, 179).

Soon after these insults are thrown at him, the people of Taif gather their teenagers and servants to chase and stone the Prophet and his companion, Zayd ibn Haritha (may Allah be pleased with him). It is one of the saddest times in the Prophet's ﷺ life.

Several years later, after the defeat of Uhud, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) asks the Prophet ﷺ, "Have you ever gone through a day harder than that of Uhud?" And the Prophet ﷺ responds by saying:

"I have suffered a great deal from your people; but the worst I have been through was on the Day of al-'Aqabah. I offered myself to 'Abd Yalil ibn 'Abd Kallal, but he rejected my offer. I left him in a very depressed mood, and I did not come to myself until I reached Qarn al-Tha'alib. I raised my head to find a cloud over me. I looked up and saw Gabriel, peace be upon him, speaking to me: 'God has heard what reply your people gave you, and He has sent you the angel in charge of the mountains to carry out your orders.' The angel of the mountains greeted me: 'God has heard what your people said in reply to you, and He has sent me to you to be at your service. If you wish, I will bring the mountains over their heads, and if you wish, I will cause the earth to swallow them.'" I said to him: 'No, I hope that God will bring out from their offspring people who worship Him alone and associate no partners with Him,' (Salahi, 182).

Even though the people of Ta'if were shouting derogatory insults at the Prophet ﷺ and pelting him with stones until his feet cracked and bled, he did not waver in his mercy. He had the opportunity to destroy a group of people that were arrogant and vicious and instead of telling the angel of the mountains to seek justice, he chooses mercy instead. It is no wonder that Allah ﷻ says about the Prophet ﷺ:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds," (Surat al Anbiyaa, 107).

Ask: Why do you think the verse mentions worlds instead of world?

It's because the Prophet ﷺ is merciful to every living thing. After the Prophet's masjid is built, the tree that he used to lean on while giving his khutba wept out of sadness. The Prophet ﷺ would also encourage the companions not to waste water while performing wudu, even if they were using a flowing stream.

Do you want to know something pretty spectacular? The night that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was supposed to return back to Mecca after Ta'if, Allah ﷻ sends him to invite a group of jinn to Islam. And this group, who we are unable to see in this realm, all became Muslim. Even at his lowest, he never wavers in his mission to spread the message of Islam.

Would anyone like to share their most favorite story about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ?



DAY 26: BUILDING GOOD HABITS

In Ramadan, it's a lot easier to fast and pray extra prayers than outside of Ramadan, don't you agree?

There is a special baraka (blessing) in this month that can't be found any other time of the year, but that doesn't mean that when Ramadan ends, we go back to being the way we were before Ramadan started, am I right?

Ask: Sometimes we feel so motivated to be super great Muslims that we will give all of our energy for a few days and try to pray extra prayers and read more Qur'an, fast, and do more dhikr, but what happens after a few days?

That's right. Often, we lose our motivation and energy to keep up that same pace. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَكْلَفُوا مِنْ الْعَمَلِ مَا تُطِيقُونَ فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الْعَمَلِ أَدْوَمُهُ وَإِنْ قَلَّ

"Take up good deeds only as much as you are able, for the best deeds are those done regularly even if they are few," (Sunan Ibn Mājah 4240).

This is actually how we start forming good habits! So instead of saying, "I'm going to pray 8 raka'at of qiyam every night," we can say, "I'm going to start praying Salatul Duha regularly until it becomes a habit."

Ask: What else can we do to establish good habits?

One way to establish the habit of wudu for example is to always make wudu after we're done using the bathroom. That way we can be more consistently in a state of wudu. We don't even have to think about it, like making our beds once we hop out of them. So try to link a good habit with something you're going to do anyway like getting out of bed or using the restroom.

Another tip is to have a friendly competition with your friend or sibling to hold yourself accountable. Do you know that Allah ﷻ wants us to "race" towards Paradise?

Ask: What do you think it means to race towards Paradise?

Do you give up midway, or do you continue to push yourself, even if you feel tired and out of energy? How does it feel when you finish the race, knowing you gave it your all?

Ask: Can anyone tell me two companions who would always compete with one another to get as many hasanat as possible?

Yes, Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) and Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him)!

عن عمر بن الخطاب قال أَمَرَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنْ نَتَصَدَّقَ فَوَافَقَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي مَالًا فَقُلْتُ الْيَوْمَ أَسْبِقُ أَبَا بَكْرٍ إِنْ سَبَقْتُهُ يَوْمًا قَالَ فَجِئْتُ بِنِصْفِ مَالِي فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا أَبْقَيْتَ لِأَهْلِكَ قُلْتُ مِثْلَهُ وَاتَى أَبُو بَكْرٍ بِكُلِّ مَا عِنْدَهُ فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ مَا أَبْقَيْتَ لِأَهْلِكَ قَالَ أَبْقَيْتُ لَهُمُ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ قُلْتُ وَاللَّهِ لَا أَسْبِقُهُ إِلَى شَيْءٍ أَبَدًا

Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, ordered us to give charity and at the time I had some wealth. I said to myself, "Today I will outdo Abu Bakr, if ever there were a day to outdo him." I went with half of my wealth to the Prophet and he said, "What have you left for your family?" I said, "The same amount." Then, Abu Bakr came with everything he had. The Prophet said, "O Abu Bakr, what have you left for your family?" Abu Bakr said, "Allah and his messenger." I said, "By Allah, I will never do better than Abu Bakr," [Sunan al-Tirmidhi].

They both motivated one another and because of that, they were able to be much better Muslims, may Allah ﷻ accept from them both!

Ask: Can each person think of one habit that you would like to carry with you throughout the entire year, even after we say farewell to Ramadan?



DAY 27: DUA, THE SWORD OF THE BELIEVER

One day a companion asked the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, how he should pray to Allah ﷻ. Is Allah ﷻ far away from us that we should shout, or is He close to us that we can pray silently? Allah ﷻ did not hesitate in answering the companion right away.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا
لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.

Allah ﷻ tells us He is near. Does anyone know how close Allah ﷻ actually is to us?

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

Allah ﷻ tells us that He is closer to us than our jugular vein, (Surat Qaf, aya 16).

Ask: Can anyone show me where our jugular vein is?

That means Allah ﷻ is so close to us! He knows how we're feeling on the inside- maybe we're scared and we're trying not to show it to the outside world. Allah ﷻ knows that! Maybe we're worried about an exam, and we're taking deep breaths to calm down- Allah ﷻ knows that too!

Ask: I want you to think of the closest person to you. When you think of this person, how do you feel?

You feel like you can talk to them about anything right? You feel like you can trust them with all of your fears and worries and they will be there to comfort you and make things better.

Well, Allah ﷻ is telling us that He, subhana wa ta'ala, is even closer to us than our closest allies! So, how should we approach Allah ﷻ?

One of the beautiful names of Allah ﷻ is "Al-Mujeeb."

Ask: Does anyone know what Al-Mujeeb means?

It means the One who Responds. Allah ﷻ promises us that He will respond to us when we ask of Him. But sometimes, we overlook this beautiful gift. Why do you think we do that?

Sometimes, we think we can get the things we want all by ourselves. Other times, we don't actually believe that Allah ﷻ will grant us what we ask for. And yet, there is this beautiful hadith that we should remember:

“Verily your Lord is Generous and Shy. If His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication) He becomes shy to return them empty,” (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi).

Yes, it’s true that sometimes we make dua for something and we don’t see the “answer” right away.

Ask: Do you know though that Allah ﷻ answers a dua in three ways? Who can tell me what they are?

Allah ﷻ answers our dua and we are able to see it answered in this world. The dua is answered, but the time of it is deferred. So, we may get the reward in Jannah, inshaAllah!

The dua prevents something bad from happening to us. We may ask for something that we think we really want and is good for us, but since Allah ﷻ knows us better than we know ourselves, Allah ﷻ doesn’t grant it to us but protects and shields us from something bad.

Allah ﷻ never ever gets tired of hearing us make dua! You know, sometimes, your friends get tired of hearing you talk about the same thing over and over again. But Allah ﷻ is the opposite. He wants us to keep talking to Him all the time. So, let’s work on being in a continuous conversation with Allah ﷻ. Let’s make dua for the big things (like the Highest level of Jannah! And the little things too- like for Allah ﷻ to help us with our homework!)



DAY 28: A GOOD DEED TREASURE HUNT

Do you know that you can make any moment in your life a time to collect good deeds? Sometimes we think the only way we can gain good deeds is by fasting, praying, or reading Qur'an. But, is that true?

I'm going to give you a bunch of scenarios, and I want you to tell me how you can transform these ordinary moments into a form of worship.

1. You're sitting bored on the couch with "nothing to do"
2. You see your parents cleaning up the kitchen.
3. Your sibling is having a temper tantrum.
4. Your sibling just snatched your favorite toy away from you.
5. You're doing your homework.
6. You hear someone talking about your friend or family member.
7. You see something inappropriate on the tv.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, reminds us that if we commit a bad deed, we should follow it up with a good deed.

عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ جُنْدَبِ بْنِ جُنَادَةَ، وَأَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «اتَّقِ اللَّهَ حَيْثُمَا كُنْتَ، وَاتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمَحُّهَا، وَخَالِقِ النَّاسَ بِخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ» .

On the authority of Abu Dharr Jundub ibn Junadah, and Abu 'Abd-ir-Rahman Mu'adh bin Jabal (may Allah be pleased with them) that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said: "Be conscious of Allah wherever you are. Follow the bad deed with a good one to erase it, and engage others with beautiful character."

Sometimes we use our bad deeds to handicap us from doing good deeds. We think, "Oh but I've messed up so many times," and we box ourselves in and maybe we even think of ourselves as "bad." That is not what Allah ﷻ wants from us at all! He wants us to be proactive and constantly striving to please Him, knowing full well that we will mess up along the way.

When you play a video game and you lose energy or hearts, do you throw your hands in the air and say, "I can never win this game?" Or, do you continue to look for ways to strengthen yourself and gain more power and energy until you finally win the game?

DAY 29: BATTLING THE SHAYTAN

Ask: Who can tell me who is one of the biggest enemies that we have to battle every single day?

Yes, the Shaytan! Before Allah ﷻ expelled the Shaytan from Jannah, the Shaytan said that he will go to battle against us.

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١٦) ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

[Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path, then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]," (Surat al A'raaf, ayaat 16-17).

Ask: What are some ways we can make sure that we win the battle against shaytan?

1. We can seek refuge from Allah ﷻ by saying, "Audhu billaahi min ash-shaytaan ar-rajeem"
2. The verse mentions that Shaytan says we will not be grateful. So, what if we did the exact opposite, and showed a lot of gratitude to Allah ﷻ?
3. The Shaytan hates hearing the Qur'an. If we recite or listen to Surat al-Baqarah inside our homes, the Shaytan does not enter it for three days!
4. When we feel lazy to get up and pray, let's force ourselves not to delay. Let's tell ourselves, "I won't let Shaytan defeat me!"
5. Ask Allah for His help. Did you notice in the verse, that the shaytan mentions he will come to us from our right and left, from in front of us and behind? But, he does not mention that he will come from on top! And our dua goes straight up to Allah ﷻ without Shaytan's interference!

Do you know that there's a companion that was so strong in his faith, that the Shaytan would run in the opposite direction when he would see him?

Ask: Does anyone know who this companion is?

Umar ibn al-Khattab



DAY 30: BUT GOD WILL SEE

Today, I want to share a story about the great painter, Michelangelo. Michelangelo knew how to paint, but his favorite form of art was sculpting. One day, Pope Julius II asked him to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He reluctantly agreed to take on this project even though it took him away from what he really wanted to do, which was sculpt. For four grueling years, Michelangelo laid on his back painting the Sistine Chapel. He gave it his absolute all. The Sistine Chapel has over 400 figures intricately painted on it. The artist worked so hard on this commission that he paid a very heavy price. Even though he was only 37 years old, he had nearly lost his eyesight, and his friends didn't recognize the old man he had become. When he was asked why he was painting a dark corner of the ceiling that no one would ever see, Michelangelo responded by saying, "God will see," (paraphrased from *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, p. 17-18 by John C. Maxwell)

When Angel Jibreel (peace be upon him) comes to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and his companions to teach us our religion, he asks the Prophet, "What is ihsan?" The Prophet ﷺ responds by saying, "That you worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you don't see Him then truly He sees you," (Bukhari and Muslim).

Ihsan is a beautiful concept and something we should all strive for. If we know Allah ﷻ is constantly watching us, how would our behavior change? Allah ﷻ loves when we do things with ihsan. That means, not just doing the bare minimum requirement, but putting in your maximum effort to produce something beautiful.

If you wanted to impress your teacher, would you answer your homework using one word fragments, or would you write out your answers in complete sentences? When you are working on an art project that you're enjoying, would you focus on getting the details right, or would you completely ignore them? When you are baking something for your family, would you skip over steps, or try your best to follow the directions to produce the most scrumptious dessert?

When we begin viewing our lives through the lens of ihsan, then we will start seeing beauty all around us. Even things that seem ugly to us are seen as opportunities for beauty. When we strive for ihsan, Allah ﷻ promises to reward us with ihsan. In Surat ar-Rahman Allah ﷻ asks:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ

"Is the reward for excellence [anything] but excellence?" (Surat Ar-Rahman, aya 60).

Whenever you show gentleness and mercy, whenever you take the right path, even though it is harder, rest assured that Allah ﷻ will reward you in the most beautiful way. The more you strive for ihsan in everything you do, the more beauty you will see in your life. So, when you clean your room, do it with ihsan. When you make wudu, be conscious of where the water falls. When you pray in front of your Creator, try your best to concentrate and show thankfulness to Allah ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ reward your effort with endless beauty.

