



QUR'ANIC WORLDVIEW

GUIDE FOR LIFE IN A BROKEN WORLD

“A Thematic Journey through the Qur'an for the Modern Human”

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Foreword

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

What you are about to read was born from conversations along the way conversations with young people, mothers, and elders. In **the barren plains of Chad, in forgotten villages across Africa, and amid the chaos of refugee camps.** I saw children smile in orphanages on Lombok, prayed with elders in remote mosques in Indonesia, and heard the *takbīr* echo beneath the rain of bombs in **Gaza**.

As a theologian, *ḥāfiẓ*, and Islamic teacher in Belgium, I could not remain confined to theory. I traveled, listened, built, and shared not to change the world, but to understand it through the light of the **Qur'an**. My work with Gardens of the sincere, active in more than forty-five countries, brought me **face to face with raw realities** and with the profound questions of youth, educators, and communities across the world.

What I have learned through all these years is this: **many people do not understand the Qur'an as it was meant to be understood. They confuse culture with revelation.** As a result, frustration, misunderstanding, and above all a great distance between human beings and the Divine message arise.

This book is my answer. **A thematic exploration of the Qur'anic worldview** a lens through which we can look at issues that are too often left unspoken. It discusses, for example, the impact of *zīnā* in an age of overstimulation, the isolation of youth searching for meaning and belonging, the shame culture transmitted from generation to generation, and the spiritual indifference of our community toward the suffering in Gaza.

Each chapter presents verses from the **Qur'an**, always accompanied by insights from **classical tafsīr** such as those of **Ibn 'Ashūr, Al-Qurṭubī, and Ar-Rāzī**. Carefully selected **Verse** further reinforce each theme without overburdening it.

What makes this book unique is the **reflective layer** that follows each section. In it, I translate these timeless insights into concrete realities of **education, upbringing, and community life**. Each **chapter concludes** with a concise reflection that calls for **self-examination and action**.

I should note that this work does not claim to be exhaustive. To keep it accessible, I have chosen a limited selection of verses, **Verse**, and scholars for each chapter. I am aware that there are many other relevant sources, yet I have selected those most fitting within the context and message of this work.

This book is written for **teachers, students, caregivers, youth, parents, and seekers** for everyone who dares to think and to feel. It is an invitation to not only recite the Qur'an, but to **understand it, live it, and apply** it even in the difficult conversations that our community has long avoided.

May Allah bless this work, open our hearts to His Word, and make these pages a source of guidance, courage, and renewal. *Āmīn*.

Introduction

The Qur'an is not merely a book of worship; it is a revelation that offers a **complete worldview** a framework in which humanity, life, death, justice, knowledge, sexuality, economy, and social relations all find their rightful place. In the early centuries of Islam, this worldview gave rise to civilization, balance, and true humanity. Today, however, many Muslims young and old experience a growing sense of **alienation** between what the Qur'an teaches and what they encounter in their daily lives.

This alienation stems from multiple causes. On one hand, there is a **lack of contextual understanding and thematic education**. On the other, many communities are trapped in a suffocating culture of silence, where complex, uncomfortable, or sensitive issues **are left undiscussed**. This leads to religious superficiality, double standards, and young people turning away from faith not out of rebellion, but out of confusion.

During my many journeys with Gardens of the Sincere, I have witnessed something striking. We continue to distribute food parcels, sacrifice animals, provide clothing, and support hospitals and that is noble, indeed. Yet at times, it feels like trying to empty a flood with a bucket. Why are there so many orphans? Why do we keep feeding generations without seeing real change?

In some villages, people simply wait for their meat during Eid, making no effort, because they know it will arrive anyway. The mentality changes. **Sadaqah becomes a habit on the receiving end, without empowering people to become self-reliant**. We must do more than just give; **we must engage people, restore their self-confidence, and address the root causes not merely the symptoms**.

This is why we believe in **long-term structural transformation**. Alongside immediate aid and awareness through books such as this one, we as an organization aim to invest in the **establishment of training centers, schools, and even universities**; places where the next generation can be shaped with a clear vision, intellectual resilience, and spiritual depth. For only when we change the mentality we can change the future.

And this is where the Qur'an re-enters the picture. Without an inner transformation of consciousness, responsibility, and upbringing nothing truly changes. **Charity is meaningful only when it uplifts the human being and provides direction**.

This book was born out of a deep conviction: the **Qur'an offers a worldview** not merely a collection of rituals or rules, but **a complete framework for understanding and shaping life**.

Instead of a traditional approach by *sūrah* or single topic, this work takes the reader on a **thematic journey** through the Qur'an from **family to society, from spirituality to social engagement, from inner struggle to collective responsibility**. Each chapter begins with **contemporary observations**, often drawn from personal experiences in Belgium, Africa, and Asia, and then deepens through Qur'anic verses supported by insights from classical scholars such as **Ibn 'Ashūr, Al-Qurṭubī, and Ar-Rāzī**.

We address themes rarely discussed in mosques or classrooms, such as:

- The normalization of zinā (sexual immorality) in a world of overstimulation,
- The silence surrounding spiritual emptiness and identity crises among youth,
- The misinterpretation of polygamy and gender roles,
- The collective failure to respond to the suffering of the Ummah, such as in Gaza,
- The tension between culture and religion, between tradition and truth.

In this book, the Qur'an does not appear as a symbolic volume resting on a shelf, but as a light, **a lens, and a guide** one that dares to address the hardest questions of our time.

This work is written for **young people, parents, educators, imams, counselors, teachers, and students** for everyone who not only wishes to recite the Qur'an but **to understand it, live it, and apply it**, even when it becomes confronting or uncomfortable.

For only when we dare to look at our weaknesses can we begin to build an Ummah that not only believes but also **lives with insight, compassion, and strength?**

May this work contribute to awareness, knowledge, and above *all a return to the Word of Allah as the guiding light for both heart and mind.*

Theme 1: The Foundations of Faith – The Five Pillars in a Qur’anic Perspective

Chapter 1 – The Foundation: We Are Servants of Allah

In an age where freedom is considered the highest virtue, the word “**slave**” sounds harsh, outdated, and even uncomfortable. Yet it lies at the very heart of our identity as believers. The Qur'an teaches us that we are not autonomous beings, but “**ibād**” servants of the One who created us.

”إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ“

“You alone we worship, and you alone we ask for help.” (*Sūrat al-Fātihah*, 1:5)

”قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ“

“Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.” (*Sūrat al-An’ām*, 6:162)

The meaning of ‘udūhiyyah (servitude to Allah) is that we **submit ourselves completely** to His will, in surrender, obedience, love, and dependence. It is an honor, not a humiliation. For in servitude to Allah lies the only **true freedom**; freedom from idols, from desires, from social pressure, and from the inner slavery to this worldly life.

1.1 Observation

During my travels across Africa and Asia, I saw young people losing themselves for hours in their smartphones, families arguing over money, and youth who neglect prayer but know everything about trends, games, or football statistics. Even in Belgium, I meet Muslim youth who **consider themselves free**, yet their time, thoughts, and identities are controlled by algorithms, likes, and entertainment.

During a visit to Malaysia, I spoke with a young man, recently married, who worked as a taxi driver. He said, “I have no time to pray; I have to work.” But as our conversation went on, it became clear that he also chose to drive extra hours not out of necessity, but out of choice. What does that say about **our priorities**?

In a village near Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, we arrived to perform the *qurbān* sacrifices and distribute meat. The men of the village sat in the shade while we and our team carried out all the slaughtering and distribution. They said it was too hot. This attitude is waiting for others to **do the work reflects a mentality that blocks true transformation**.

In Uganda, I met a man who called himself an imam. He had a well built by *Gardens of the Sincere*, fully funded by donations, yet he had replaced our nameplate with another and claimed to a new donor that he had built it himself. This was not poverty; it was **spiritual exploitation**. This form of slavery is treacherous because it appears normal. Yet every habit that weakens our connection with Allah is a chain around the heart.

1.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat adh-Dhāriyāt (51:56)

"وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونَ"

"And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship me."

- **Ibn Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse summarizes the **ultimate purpose of human existence**: 'ibādah (worship). According to him, 'ibādah is not limited to rituals such as prayer or fasting, but signifies a **deep inner submission and obedience** to Allah in every aspect of life. He explains that this verse establishes the **existential foundation of human life** the purpose of creation is spiritual connection with the Creator, not material success.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states that in this verse, Allah **decisively rejects every alternative worldview**. Life is not about wealth, pleasure, status, or power; it is about worship. He further explains that "li-ya 'budūn" ("to worship Me") also **refers to ma'rifah** (knowledge of Allah), based on the saying: "Worship is the knowledge of Allah" (العبادة هي المعرفة). True worship, according to Ar-Rāzī, **begins with knowing Allah's Names, Attributes, and Signs** which leads to love, awe, and surrender.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this verse as a reminder of **life's true priority**. He states that worship is the reason why **everything in creation has been subjected to human use** (food, air, earth), yet man himself was created for Allah. He stresses that 'ibādah must be both **internal and external** not a ritual without heart, nor merely a spiritual state without action. He warns that whoever forgets this purpose wastes his life.

The **purpose of life** is worship not as a limitation, but as the **fulfillment of existence**. Worship is **more than rituals**; it is a way of life rooted in recognition, love, obedience, and devotion to Allah. Whoever ignores this purpose will wander from goal to goal but never find true contentment.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-An'ām (6:162)

"قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايِ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ"

"Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds."

- **Ibn Āshūr** regards this verse as a **summary of complete devotion**. He highlights that the list prayer (*ṣalāh*), sacrifice (*nusuk*), life (*mahyā*), and death (*mamāt*) **represents the entire human existence**. For him, it means that every act, whether worldly or spiritual, must be done with full **awareness of Allah**. It encompasses not only worship in the mosque, but also life choices, attitudes toward death, and even intentions.
- **Ar-Rāzī** sees this verse as a **statement of pure *tawhīd* (monotheism)**. Everything of value from ritual acts to the entirety of existence is **entirely devoted to Allah**. He notes that "nusuk" refers specifically to sacrificial acts, but can also be understood more broadly as **all forms of dedication**, even suffering and self-sacrifice for Allah's sake. Ar-Rāzī emphasizes that the

verse also **rejects *shirk*** (association of partners with Allah): nothing in life or death belongs to anyone or anything other than him.

- **Al-Qurtubī** views this verse as the ultimate expression of ***ikhlās*** (sincerity). He describes it as a refutation of all forms of idolatry and hypocrisy. According to him, this verse teaches the believer that every breath, every action, every dream, and even the manner of one's death **must be colored by the intention to please Allah**. Al-Qurtubī also notes that this verse has a prophetic dimension it was addressed to the Prophet ﷺ as a message to his people, and as a timeless lesson for every Muslim after him.

This verse reminds us that **Islam is not merely a part of life it is life itself**. True submission means that our plans, choices, successes, and failures **all exist for Allah's sake**. Only when these aspects are devoted to Him does life gain meaning, coherence, and inner peace.

1.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"تَعِسَنْ عَبْدُ الدِّينَارِ، تَعِسَنْ عَبْدُ الدِّرْهَمِ، تَعِسَنْ عَبْدُ الْخَيْرِيَّةِ، تَعِسَنْ وَانْتَكَسَ، وَإِذَا شِيكَ فَلَا انتَقْشَ"

"Perished is the slave of the dinar, perished is the slave of the dirham, perished is the slave of fine cloth and luxury. He is ruined and humiliated, and when he is pricked by a thorn, he will not be healed."

(Sahīh al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ warns that whoever attaches his heart to wealth or luxury becomes a slave to those things. This form of slavery is invisible, yet as real as the physical chains of the past. It is precisely what we witness today young people who seek their worth in brands, money, fame, or even likes on social media, losing in the process their sense of servitude to Allah.

1.4 Reflective Layer

The message of **true servitude** touches every dimension of our existence. In a world where success is often measured by **popularity, possessions, or comfort**, the Qur'an calls us to seek our identity not through the eyes of people but through our **connection with the Creator**. True honor does not lie in how the world perceives you, but in **how you serve Allah**.

In **upbringing**, this means teaching our children from a young age that their identity does not begin with a celebrity, a sports idol, or an influencer but with **Allah**. A child who knows **whom he serves** grows with **stability, self-confidence, and direction** not out of arrogance, but because he knows where he comes from and **where he is headed**.

In **education**, the concept of **servitude** must never be secondary. Tawḥid is not merely an academic subject; it is the **essence of who we are**. Islamic education must not only **inform** young people about rituals or rules but **shape them into conscious believers** who carry their faith with conviction and purpose.

And in our **spirituality**, we must constantly ask ourselves: Whom do I truly serve? My comfort? My desires? The expectations of others? Or **my Lord**? For as long as we remain bound to our **inclinations, laziness, or cultural habits**, we remain prisoners of ourselves even if we feel “free.”

True liberation begins when we mold our hearts toward **obedience** to Allah not through coercion, but through **love**. Only then do we cease to be slaves of systems, trends, or fears, and become **conscious servants** building an Ummah that is not dependent, but **responsible**; not swayed by the winds of opinion, but guided by divine light.

1.5 Conclusion

Before we discuss topics such as zina, identity, education, or Gaza, we must first understand something essential: **we are servants of Allah**. This is the foundation of our faith. If we forget that, we will fail to grasp the rest of the Qur'an.

When you see yourself as a servant of Allah, your **entire outlook changes**. You no longer choose what simply feels good or what others do, you first ask: “What does Allah want from me?” Only then can you make the right choices. Only then do you live with purpose.

This first lesson is not a stern warning, but **a wake-up call**. It reminds you that your worth does not lie in money, likes, or so-called freedom but in your bond with Allah. True dignity and freedom are found only when you live as Allah desires.

Look at what Allah says in the Qur'an, in Sūrat al-Isra':

”سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَنْدِهِ لَيْلًا“

“Glory be to Him who took His servant by night...” (Qur'an – al-Isrā', 17:1)

He did not call the Prophet ﷺ a “leader” or a “hero,” but a **servant** for that is the highest title a human being can attain.

When we understand this, we will stand stronger. We will see life differently. Together, we will build an **Ummah that lives with conviction**, love, and strength connected to Allah and connected to one another. May Allah help us become his true servants, with our whole hearts.

Chapter 2 – The Meaning and Weight of the Shahada

2.1 Observation

The shahāda “*Lā ilāha illa Allāh, Muhammādur Rasūlullāh*” is the key to Islam, the gateway to faith. Yet we find that for many, this key is spoken but never consciously held.

In practice, as an **Islamic teacher and field worker**, I observe that many **young Muslims** are Muslim **simply because their parents**. They were raised in a **culturally Islamic environment**: learning to pray, reciting some Arabic, fasting in Ramadan, eating halal. But often **without depth, without reflection, without a conscious decision**. Islam was handed to them as an identity rarely as a conviction.

In contrast, **converts to Islam** often remember the very hour they pronounced their *shahāda*. They did so with awareness, reason, and a deep yearning for meaning and truth. And usually, their Islam is more deeply rooted precisely because it was a **deliberate choice**.

During our projects in places like **Madagascar**, we noticed that some people uttered **the shahāda merely to receive a food parcel**, a sack of rice, or other aid not out of conviction, but to gain something. Yet the *shahāda* is not a transaction; it is a **covenant with Allah**.

During a humanitarian project in the Philippines, we built a mosque in an area where, historically, people were already Muslim before the Spanish colonization. *SubhānAllāh*, the response was overwhelming. After a lecture I gave there, more than thirty people embraced Islam. This shows how vital it is to think strategically in our projects: a **mosque is not only a place of prayer but a center for rediscovering one's true identity**. When you understand *where* to build a mosque, it can reopen doors for entire communities to return to their original faith.

Even today, the power of the **shahāda** is alive. Every week, people embrace Islam; sometimes after years of searching, reflection, or spiritual hunger. It is deeply moving and inspiring. **Yet a new challenge arises: what happens after conversion?**

Sadly, some new Muslims, right after their shahāda, find themselves surrounded by conservative or rigid groups that overwhelm them with rules and prohibitions without space for gradual growth or understanding. Some are bombarded with questions of fiqh, clothing rules, or differences between legal schools long before they grasp the foundations of *tawhīd* or learn to pray. I have witnessed this firsthand: a convert who completely withdrew after a few months, overwhelmed and confused.

The shahāda is the beginning of a journey, not the destination. Every journey requires patience, guidance, and space. New Muslims need time to grow step by step with room for questions, mistakes, and the freedom to find their own path within faith.

We also frequently see another pattern: the emotional moment of conversion is celebrated with hugs, tears, and congratulations but within days, everyone returns to their own lives, leaving the new Muslim alone. No guidance. No community. No friendship.

This is why it is urgent that we invest in structured follow-up and care through mosques, organizations, and initiatives that offer continuous support to new Muslims. Not only at the emotional moment of *shahāda*, but in the months and years that follow: in understanding the Qur'an, integrating faith into daily life, and building a healthy spiritual identity.

“The shahāda is not a formula it is a life choice.”

Finally, there exists within many Muslim communities the belief that all non-Muslims are automatically destined for Hell. Children are often taught this as a simple fact without nuance, without distinction, without context. But when we return to the Qur'an and the era of revelation, we notice something important: The verses that speak of punishment for the disbelievers were primarily directed toward people like the **Quraysh**

- Those who heard the message,
- Saw the Prophet ﷺ with their own eyes,
- Recognized the truth,
- Yet rejected it out of arrogance or self-interest.

In our time, the situation is different. Many people around the world have never truly encountered Islam let alone in a pure, authentic form. Some know it only through distorted media portrayals, war, or the bad examples of others. Can we then hastily claim that such people are “disbelievers” in the sense intended by the Qur'an?

2.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Tāhā (20:8)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْأَكْبَرُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى

“Allah there is no deity except him. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** This verse reaffirms *tawhīd* the absolute oneness and divinity of Allah as the core of faith. It forms the starting point of every act of belief and worship.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** He explains that the negation (*lā ilāha*) followed by the affirmation (*illā Allāh*) represents a total rejection of all other deities, false priorities, or objects of devotion in life.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** The *shahāda* is not merely a statement of words but a commitment of heart and action. Whoever utters it yet behaves as though there are multiple powers besides Allah has not grasped its true essence.

The verse reminds us that lā ilāha illa Allāh is not only a sentence to recite but a worldview to live by one that purifies the heart from dependence on anything but Allah and reorders our priorities toward Him alone.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-Hujurāt (49:15)

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا

“Indeed, the true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and then do not doubt...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** True īmān comes with steadfastness without doubt, without superficiality. The shahāda is therefore not a passing phrase but a stable and enduring inner state.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse perfectly aligns with the idea that the genuine believer does not waver between worlds; he stands firm in his conviction.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Doubt often arises from ignorance or lack of knowledge. Thus, this verse underlines the necessity of intellectual and spiritual understanding when declaring the shahāda.

To live the *shahāda* means to cultivate certainty (*yaqīn*) an unshakable awareness that anchors the believer amidst life’s storms. Faith is not blind emotion; it is enlightened conviction rooted in knowledge and trust in Allah.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-Anfāl (8:55)

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who disbelieve and they do not believe, even after recognizing the truth.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** He clarifies that this description does not refer to those who are ignorant of the truth or have no access to it, but to those who knowingly reject it despite clear evidence.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** He observes that the disbelief mentioned here is accompanied by arrogance and deliberate denial after recognition of the truth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** He highlights that the Qur'an differentiates between those who knowingly reject the truth and those who remain unaware or misinformed about it.

Classical scholars such as **Ibn Taymiyyah**, **al-Ghazālī**, and **Ibn ‘Āshūr** elaborated on this distinction. They differentiated between:

- **Ad-da‘wah al-muballaghah** when the message has been clearly conveyed, and
- **Al-‘udhr bil-jahl** the excuse of ignorance.

Those who never received the message clearly, or who only encountered a distorted version of Islam, cannot automatically be judged as disbelievers in the same sense as those whom the Qur'an describes.

Therefore, it is not for us to determine who will enter Paradise or Hell. That judgment belongs solely to **Allah the Most Just and the Most Merciful**.

The shahāda must thus be understood not merely as a ticket to Paradise, but as a conscious act of surrender a sacred commitment that not everyone receives, or recognizes, under the same circumstances.

2.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ"

"Whoever dies knowing that there is no deity except Allah will enter Paradise."
(Sahih Muslim)

Reflection: The key word in this Verse is "knowing" (*ya'lam*). It is not merely about pronouncing the words, but about understanding, realizing, and affirming them. Without knowledge, the *shahāda* is just sound an empty utterance without meaning.

Verse 2:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَنْ قَالَ لِأَخِيهِ: يَا كَافِرُ, فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِهَا أَحَدُهُمَا, فَإِنْ كَانَ كَمَا قَالَ, وَإِلَّا رَجَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ"

"If a man says to his brother, 'You are a disbeliever,' then one of them bears the consequence of that statement. If it is true, then it applies to the person described; but if it is not, it returns upon the one who uttered it."
(Sahih al-Bukhari)

Reflection: This Verse teaches us to be extremely cautious when passing judgment on the faith of others. It is not for us to decide someone's final destiny. Only Allah knows what lies within a person's heart, circumstances, and intentions. To rush in declaring others unbelievers (*takfir*) is not only unjust it can endanger one's own soul.

2.4 Reflective Layer

Uttering the shahāda is not a magical formula that guarantees salvation, but a conscious decision to acknowledge and serve Allah as the One and Only.

In **parenting**, this means that we do not simply teach our children to say "*lā ilaha illa Allah*" but help them understand what those words truly mean love for Allah, obedience to him, reliance upon him, and rejection of every form of idolatry, whether it appears in the form of idols, trends, or desires.

We must also give children space to ask questions and express doubts without fear. The shahāda is not a sword used to condemn others but a bridge to compassion and understanding. We should teach our children that Allah is just and that the final judgment of who is saved or not belongs solely to him not to us.

In **Islamic education**, lessons on tawhīd and the meaning of “*lā ilāha illa Allāh*” should stand at the center. Not as dry theory, but as a way of life. Cultural Islam without conviction leads to spiritual emptiness. That is why we must create opportunities for faith renewal grounded in knowledge and love, not in habit or social pressure.

In **da‘wah** and community work, we must avoid judging people whose stories we do not know. Many have never truly heard or seen the beauty of Islam. Approach them with gentleness and respect. Let your character be the invitation.

And above all remain humble. The fact that you were granted faith is not your achievement; it is a gift from Allah. And a gift should never produce arrogance, but responsibility.

2.5 Conclusion

The shahāda is the foundation of our identity as Muslims but every foundation must be solid. If it is built on habit, culture, or convenience, it will collapse at the first storm of doubt or hardship. Only those who consciously and rationally choose Allah will remain spiritually steadfast.

The shahāda is not a weapon to exclude others, but a light we are entrusted to carry. It is about acknowledging Allah, loving His message, and following the Prophet ﷺ not about stigmatizing those who live differently.

When we understand that the Qur'an's warnings were addressed to those who knew the truth and still rejected it, we also realize that not every non-Muslim falls into that category. Many have never truly encountered Islam, or have only seen a distorted image of it.

Let us therefore approach the shahāda as the Companions once did with gratitude, responsibility, and love for humanity. And let us never use our words to build walls where Allah may still have left doors open.

Chapter 3 – Prayer: The Backbone of the Worldview

3.1 Observation

There is no pillar in Islam that is mentioned as frequently yet neglected as often as prayer (*as-salāh*). Across the world, from Belgium to Japan, prayer remains one of the greatest weaknesses among Muslims. Many do not pray at all, or only occasionally. And among those who do, many pray out of habit without reflection, without presence, without understanding.

In classrooms, students proudly declare that they are Muslim *al-hamdu lillāh!* yet when the conversation turns to prayer, silence fills the room. Not long ago, I stood outside a Turkish mosque and saw some of my former students. **The congregational prayer had already begun.** I called out, “Come, let’s go inside.” One of them replied, “I’ll pray later at home.” But who knows if he ever did? Everyone seems **to find an excuse** to postpone or even avoid prayer.

In my experience as an Islamic teacher, I ask my students each year who among them performs the five daily prayers. The answer is always shocking: **barely 20 to 25 percent and often**, those are newcomers from countries like Somalia or Afghanistan. The third-generation Muslims; They have largely lost their connection to prayer. Moreover, what about the many young people who recite *Sūrat al-Fatiḥah* every day without knowing its meaning? How can one claim to have a conversation with Allah while not understanding the words being spoken? For many, prayer has been reduced to a physical routine devoid of spiritual depth as if it were merely a form of cardio exercise.

Today, many young people and adults as well struggle with various addictions: endless gaming, scrolling, and smoking, watching prohibited content, or chasing desires. What most do not realize is that the first step toward healing is not therapy, medication, or a detox program it is *salāh*. Whoever performs prayer correctly, on time, with understanding and sincere connection to Allah, will find that the soul begins to rest, the conscience awakens, and sins begin to weigh heavily on the heart. Prayer is not a duty beside the problem it is the **beginning of the solution**.

As long as the feet do not stand firmly on the prayer mat, the heart will continue to wander drifting between desire and emptiness.

3.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verses Sūrat al-Ma’ārij (70:19–21)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلْوَعًا (19) فَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (20) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مُتُوْعًا (21) إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّيُّنَ

“Surely, the human being was created anxious: when hardship touches him, he panics; and when good comes to him, he is withholding **except** those who pray.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** The term *halū‘* (هَلْوَعَ) denotes an intense, jittery craving for comfort a person unable to bear setbacks and addicted to ease. Yet the Qur’an carves out an exception: *illā al-muṣallīn* “except those who pray.”

- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse sketches a psychological profile of the human being: panicky and stingy. Prayer is the therapy that reforms this temperament.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer disciplines the ego: it structures life, makes us patient in trial and grateful in bounty. Whoever truly prays stops being driven by impulse?

This means a Muslim's worldview is not built merely on what he feels or possesses today, but on the larger realities of the Hereafter, the Ummah, and the divine plan. Whoever prays rises above himself?

Verse Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij (70:23)

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“Those who are constant in their prayers.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Dā’imūn (دائمون) goes deeper than merely observing prayer times. It signals sustained attentiveness and dedication. These are people who never neglect their prayers, regardless of circumstance; prayer is the backbone of their daily life.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse sits within a passage listing the qualities of true believers. Dā’imūn includes **praying with khushū‘** (humility), establishing the obligatory prayers and nawāfil (supererogatory), and recognizing prayer as the bond with Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Dā’imūn indicates **continuous spiritual connection**. They do not seek excuses; prayer is their **moral anchor**. Even when others neglect prayer, they maintain it with devotion.

Allah speaks here further about those who are steadfast in their prayers and what character traits they derive from it.

Character traits of the sincere believer

Verses Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij (70:24–34)

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ (70:24)

“And in their wealth there is a known right.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** A consciousness that wealth is a trust from Allah, obliging one to share.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Establishes social responsibility in the Islamic economy; a believer does not think only of himself.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Ma‘lūm (“a known due”) points to both Zakāh and regular voluntary ḥādīth.

لِلْسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (70:25)

“For the beggar and the deprived (who do not ask).”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Allah mentions both the one who asks and the one too dignified to ask warning us not to judge needs by appearances.

- **Al-Qurṭubī:** An appeal to give with insight and compassion seeing hidden poverty, not only what is visible.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The *mahrūm* is often needier than the asker yet overlooked.

وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (70:26)

“And those who affirm the Day of Recompense.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Real belief in the Hereafter produces ethical conduct here and now.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Whoever believes in Resurrection will act justly.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Faith in Judgment Day fuels charity and chastity.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفَقُونَ (70:27)

“And those who are apprehensive of their Lord’s punishment.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** *Mushfiqūn* denotes not mere fear but tender humility and concern.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** True spirituality includes a measure of fear to counter pride and complacency.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** This fear balances religious life and keeps one alert in fulfilling duties.

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (70:28)

“Indeed, none can feel secure from the punishment of their Lord.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Even the most devout cannot presume safety the verse nurtures humility and vigilance.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** No one should deem himself “safe”; arrogance is a stealth killer of faith.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The intent is continual awareness; safety lies in constant devotion.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ (70:29)

“And those who guard their chastity.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** They confine sexual desire within lawful bounds.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** A sign of self-control born of *taqwā*.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Chastity flows from spiritual purity strengthened by prayer.

إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (70:30)

“Except with their spouses or those their right hands possess; then they are free of blame.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Islam recognizes human needs yet sets clear limits.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Fidelity within marriage undergirds moral stability.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The exception displays both mercy and order.

(70:31) فَمَنْ أَبْتَغَىْ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

“But whoever seeks beyond that such are the transgressors.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Any sexual pursuit outside these bounds violates purity.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Indicates moral decay and loss of spiritual discipline.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Such behavior erodes the transformative impact of prayer.

(70:32) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

“And those who are faithful to their trusts and covenants.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Guarding trust reflects an upright heart.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Fidelity to people often mirrors fidelity in prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Keeping one’s word is a hallmark of true *īmān*.

(70:33) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ

“And those who stand firm in their testimony.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Honest testimony safeguards rights and society.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Steadfast testimony correlates with truthfulness in prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** It requires courage and moral clarity.

(70:34) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

“And those who carefully maintain their prayers.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** This signals punctual, conscious, and devoted prayer.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer crowns all deeds; whoever guards it guards his soul.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Not merely performing prayer, but keeping it alive in the heart.

What it means to truly pray

These verses describe not just any believer, but the one whose prayer is real not prayer as habit, but as transformation. Such people give out of reverent fear of Allah, even unprompted; they sincerely believe in the **Day of Judgment**; they live chastely, keep their promises, and bear honest witness. Above all, they guard their prayer in performance and in meaning.

Yet today, from Africa to Asia to Europe, we see millions who have prayed for 10, 20, even 30 years, five times a day, often in the mosque but that **prayer leaves scant trace on character, ethics, or dealings**. They gossip, cheat, are stingy, aggressive, or dishonest and see no problem so long as they “keep praying.”

This is one of our greatest wounds: prayer without awareness, ritual without morals, and submission without transformation. Allah did not institute prayer as a mere physical exercise, but as a schooling

of the soul. These verses remind us: if prayer does not change you, you may be praying with your body but not with your heart.

Verse Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:143)

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

“Allah would never let your faith be lost. Truly Allah is Most Gentle, Most Merciful to mankind.”

Context: Revealed when the qiblah changed from Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) to the Ka‘bah (Makkah). Some Companions worried about the prayers they had performed facing Jerusalem.

- **Ibn Kathīr:** Īmān here refers to ṣalāh (prayer).
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Allah calls prayer “faith” to magnify its worth; it is the central proof of genuine belief.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Without prayer, faith is incomplete; ṣalāh is the tangible proof of an inner conviction.

So although the verse literally says “faith,” the scholars agree it addresses the prayers already performed.

Verse Sūrat at-Tawbah (9:11)

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْوَا الْزَّكُوْةَ فَإِخْرُجُنُّمْ فِي الدِّينِ

“But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, then they are your brothers in religion.”

- **Ibn Āshūr:** Highlights outward deeds as prerequisites for religious brotherhood; faith must manifest in prayer and zakāh to be fully recognized within the community.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Neglect of ṣalah fractures brotherhood. This bond is not merely emotional or cultural, but religious and conditional.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Ṣalah and zakāh are not optional; they are essential building blocks of faith, marking the boundary of Islamic belonging.

Verse Sūrat Maryam (19:59)

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَصَاغُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْبَغُوا الشَّهَوَاتِ فَسَوْفَ يُلْقَوْنَ عَيْنًا

“Then there succeeded them generations who neglected the prayer and followed desires; they will soon meet ruin.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** “*Adā‘ū ṣalāh*” need not mean total abandonment; delaying it beyond its time and treating it lightly is already a loss.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Neglecting prayer precipitates moral decline; without *ṣalāh*, one more readily succumbs to desires.

- **Ar-Rāzī:** Losing prayer opens the door to spiritual collapse. “*Fasawfa yalqawna ghayyan*” points to deviation and, per some Companions, to a specific valley in Hell (Ghayy) for those who abandon prayer.

Here, abandoning prayer is directly linked to falling away from faith.

Verse - Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:3)

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ ينفِقُونَ

“*Those who believe in the Unseen, establish the prayer, and spend out of what we have provided them.*”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Allah places prayer immediately after belief in the **Unseen as its visible manifestation**.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer is the first outward deed through which inner conviction appears.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer is the pivot of deeds; without it, the rest of faith is weak and incomplete.

Verse Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt (29:45)

أَقْرُبُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفُحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

“*Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish the prayer. Indeed, prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing. And the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows what you do.*”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Prayer shapes not only the individual but **society**; it must yield **moral change**, not mere ritual repetition.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer is purifying. When performed correctly, it deters grave sins (faḥshā) and **forbidden acts** (munkar). If someone prays yet persists in corruption, something is fundamentally wrong in his understanding or performance of prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** “The remembrance of Allah is greater” means **presence-of-heart** in prayer outweighs outward motion.

Verse Sūrat al-Muddaththir (74:43) (the citation is often miswritten as 29:43)

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

“*They will say: We were not among those who prayed.*”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** That neglecting prayer is named first shows it as the key to spiritual downfall and moral decay.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** These verses indicate that prayer is the absolute minimum for preserving *īmān*; willful neglect signals deep indifference toward Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer is the bridge between servant and Lord; breaking it severs one from guidance, purification, and moral protection.

Prayer as a Mirror: Self-Reflection and Self-Control

Ṣalāh is not merely ritual; it is a moment of inner confrontation. Five times a day, the believer pauses to assess deeds, intentions, and direction. Prayer becomes a **spiritual mirror**: “What am I doing? Whom do I truly serve? What is the state of my heart?”

Verse Sūrat al-A‘lā (87:14–15)

(15) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى (14) وَذَكَرَ أَسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“Successful indeed is the one who purifies himself, remembers the Name of his Lord, and then prays.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Tazakkā (self-purification) refers not only to outward conduct but to inner cleansing; for which prayer is a concrete instrument.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse **couples dhikr (remembrance)** with embodied worship as the key to success; prayer is the practical expression of inner purification.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer not only purifies actions; it trains the heart to self-monitor and stay alert to sin.

In sujūd (prostration), the believer becomes literally the lowest and thus the closest to Allah. It is the moment when self-reflection can be purest. Prayer is therefore a school of self-control: learning to wait, to pause, to say “no” to the nafs.

Compare this with addictions that afflict many today from gaming and social media to prohibited content or smoking. The first step toward freedom is not a harsh regimen or guilt it is regular, mindful prayer. A heart that returns to its Lord five times a day will, over time, learn to set boundaries on its desires.

3.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

الْعَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيَّنَنَا وَبَيَّنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ

“The covenant between us and them is the prayer; whoever abandons it has committed disbelief.”
(Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2621; authenticated by al-Albānī)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ describes prayer as the criterion of genuine faith. When prayer is sound, other deeds are sound; when prayer fails, faith falters. On the Day of Judgment, prayer will be the first deed to be examined it is the mirror of our spiritual life.