

Counsel from the Qur'an for Those Who Wish to Deepen Their Faith

Many people wish to know God more deeply, to understand the Qur'an better, to comprehend the truth behind apparent events and to increase their knowledge of the true nature of the world. Yet amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, worldly matters take precedence over these wishes. Their attention is distracted by their jobs, business lives, schools, lessons, daily problems, shopping, expenses, bills, the likes they receive on social media, daily news, gossip and arguments, and they forget the subjects to which they should attach real importance. At the end of the day, they find themselves at such a point that, as though they were not the ones who initially possessed these sublime wishes, they have come to behave like worldlings who are firmly attached to this world.

In fact, however, they wish to be deeper people in faith, spirituality and knowledge. Yet as a requirement of the test, they may ascribe a power independent of God to the matters and people they encounter and allow themselves to be swept along by the flow of daily events. They thus miss all the opportunities they could make use of to deepen, think more deeply and comprehend the truth. In the end, they find themselves back at the point where they began. Yet inwardly they feel troubled by the situation into which they have fallen and sense that they have remained far removed from the depth they desire.



However, there is an inconsistency in a person who lives the daily affairs of the world as though they were an absolute reality, becomes angry in the face of events, grows irritated because of setbacks, dwells on what people think of him and falls into many other behaviors arising from the lower self, then laments, **“Why am I unable to deepen?”** A person who wishes to draw closer to God and possess profound knowledge must show the care required by these precious wishes. It is certainly a contradiction to expect to deepen without properly complying with the commands and recommendations God reveals in the Qur'an, without displaying the necessary will and effort, and by abandoning oneself to worldly preoccupations and the desires of the lower self.

A person who wishes to draw closer to God and possess deeper knowledge and spirituality must remain in a constant state of prayer and turning toward Him, both verbally and through deeds, extending throughout his entire life. Moreover, the morality of the Qur'an that he displays throughout the day is also a prayer through deeds that reveals his respect and love for God and his desire to draw closer to Him. Never placing anything before God's approval, striving to live in a manner that will please Him and complying with His commands and recommendations in every situation he encounters are the reflections of this turning toward Him in life. That is because prayer is not an act of worship performed only in words. A person's morality and behavior also reveal his turning toward God and the effort he makes to fulfill what his wish requires.

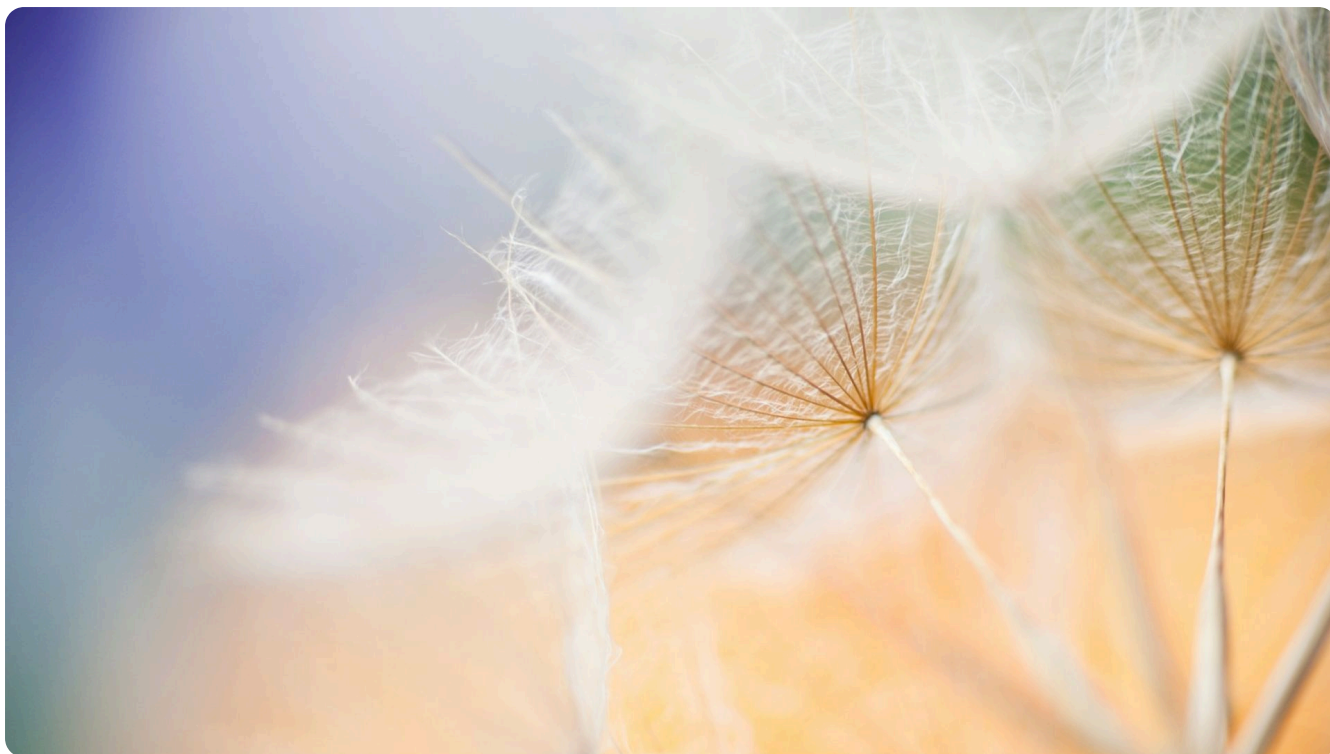
Depth is not something attained merely by accumulating knowledge. If a person truly wishes to draw closer to God and attain the depth He will grant him, he must turn the entire course of his life in that direction. Turning toward God means turning one's face toward Him at every moment and in every sphere of life, not merely at certain times, and striving on this path without placing anything before the desire to draw closer to Him.

In the Qur'an, the words of the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) reveal with the utmost clarity how this turning should be:

"I have turned my face to Him, Who brought the heavens and Earth into being, and will live a righteous life. I am no idolater." (Surat al-An`am, 79)

In these words, it is particularly emphasized that while the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) turned his whole being toward God, he did not associate any partners with Him. This statement reveals that turning toward God does not merely consist of accepting His existence, but requires directing one's entire outlook and orientation solely toward Him with an understanding purified of ascribing partners to Him.

A person who wishes to deepen must also turn toward God, just like the Prophet Abraham (pbuh), with a powerful orientation free of ascribing partners to Him. If a person becomes caught up in things belonging to the life of this world in his daily life and regards them as absolute, he must reconsider his understanding of *tawhid* (Oneness of God). If he forgets that people, events and worldly matters are images created by God and that absolute reality belongs to God alone, he must reflect anew on God's attributes and His power and will over all things.



The understanding of the Oneness of God set forth by the Qur'an requires, beyond verbally accepting God's existence, living by acknowledging Him alone as the deity in every sphere of life. A person who believes must devote his entire life to God. It is revealed in verse 162 of Surat al-An'am: **"Say: 'My salat (regular prayer) and my rites, my living and my dying, are for God alone, the Lord of all the worlds'"** In the continuation of the verse, it is said, "Who has no partner." It is thus revealed that worship and life cannot be considered separately from one another, and it is emphasized that a person must live every sphere of his life knowing that God is the one and absolute deity.

As can be understood from all this, merely conducting more research is not sufficient to possess profound faith and insight. A person must make God's approval and good pleasure the sole priority and center of his life; his heart must burn with love of God, ardor and longing for Paradise; he must desire to draw closer to God wholeheartedly and without interruption, and must place nothing before this wish. He must desire to be close to God even among crowds, and must maintain this orientation during his most difficult and trying moments and when he is in conflict with his lower self. Even in environments where worldly means, wealth and comfort become most appealing, he must not forget God even for a moment and must continue to desire to draw closer to Him with profound sincerity.

Pharaoh's wife is given as an example of this in the Qur'an. Although she lived in Pharaoh's palace amid wealth and splendor, she did not place any of these before her desire to be close to God. Her prayer is related in the Qur'an as follows:

“God has made an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said: ‘My Lord, build a house in the Garden for me in Your Presence, rescue me from Pharaoh and his deeds, and rescue me from this wrongdoing people.’” (Surat at-Tahrim, 11)

Pharaoh's wife sought not the palace in which she lived or the means she possessed, but closeness to God and His good pleasure. She desired not an increase in her worldly means, but to possess a station in the Sight of God. This prayer of hers is a very meaningful example showing what the heart of a person who believes truly turns toward and desires.

The works of Islamic scholars also contain important explanations showing that deepening does not merely consist of acquiring knowledge. In his work *Futuh al-Ghayb*, Abdul Qadir al-Jilani discusses how a person purified of ascribing partners to God turns toward Him, trusts in Him and regards no being other than Him as an independent power. He expresses this approach in the following words:

“When a person witnesses the actions of God, the Almighty and the All-Glorious, they become certain that, in reality, there is no doer of anything except God, and no one who sets things in motion or brings them to a halt except Him. They recognize that good and evil, benefit and harm, gain and loss, giving and withholding are all in His hands. Thus, they see none other than God, recognize that blessings come through His grace, attain happiness through nearness to Him, seek refuge in remembering Him, rely upon Him, and place their trust in Him. They find guidance through the light of His knowledge.”

In this explanation by al-Jilani, there is a powerful relationship between closeness to God and comprehending that there is no independent agent other than Him. When a person ceases to regard the events and beings he encounters as powers independent of God, he will comprehend the Oneness of God more deeply. Seeking refuge in remembrance of God, trusting in Him alone and putting his trust in Him mean turning his face completely toward God. This approach of al-Jilani shows that closeness to God is related not merely to acquiring knowledge, but to a person's putting into practice in his life the verses of the Qur'an of which he is already aware, and turning his entire outlook and orientation toward Him.



Wishing to be close to God and truly advance in knowledge and having a devout faith is directly related to fulfilling what these wishes require and displaying great care and effort for this. At this point, we encounter a very clear measure in the Qur'an:

“That man will have nothing but what he strives for; that his striving will most certainly be seen; that he will then receive repayment of the fullest kind.” (Surat an-Najm, 39-41)

The Arabic equivalent of the word “**striving**” in the verse is *sa'y* (سَعْي). In Arabic, *sa'y* means making an effort, striving, and working toward a purpose. Therefore, what is described here is not merely a person's wish or desire for something, but their active striving to attain it. Drawing closer to God is the most precious and sublime wish in a believer's life. The striving, in other words the *sa'y*, of a person who wishes to draw closer to God will be manifested entirely in his effort to put the Qur'an into practice and seek God's approval.

A person can have only that for which he strives. Therefore, a person who wishes to deepen must not be content merely to wish, but must live in a manner that will lead him to that depth. He must turn his face completely toward God, rigorously avoid regarding people, events and worldly

images as realities independent of God, and turn toward Him with love at every moment. Thus, in return for his sincere and uninterrupted turning toward Him, he will certainly attain the closeness, knowledge and depth he desires as a blessing from God.

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