



## UNIT D

# SPIRITUAL HEALTH

4. ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE ALL ELSE

# CHAPTER 4:

## ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE ALL ELSE

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Prophet Dawud (ﷺ) would make this dua’: ‘O Allah! I ask you for your Divine Love, and the love of those who love You, and the deeds that will draw me to Your Love! O Allah! Make [my desire] for your Love more beloved to me than myself, and my family, and cold water!’” [At-Tirmidhi]

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: ((كَانَ مِنْ دُعَاءِ دَاوُدَ يَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَالْعَمَلَ الَّذِي يُبَلِّغُنِي حُبَّكَ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ نَفْسِي وَأَهْلِي وَمِنَ الْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ)). رواه الترمذي



## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 4. ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE ALL ELSE

#### SECTION 1:

#### ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE DESIRES

- An Nafs al-Ammarah: The Inciting Self
- An Nafs al-Lawwamah: The Accusing Self
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#### SECTION 2:

#### ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE FAMILY INFLUENCE

- A Muslim Family's Influence on Fitrah
- A Non-Muslim Family's Influence on Fitrah

#### SECTION 3:

#### ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE CULTURAL INFLUENCE

- The Influence of Muslim-Majority Cultures
- The Influence of Non-Muslim Cultures

#### OBJECTIVES

After this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify the three types of An Nafs (desires).
2. Define fitrah.
3. Explain why 20% of Muslims leave Islam as adults.
4. State the dangers of bid'a (innovation).
5. Identify challenges many Muslim youth have living in a non-Muslim predominant culture.

## What Do You Put in the Center of Your Life?

The center of your life is what gives you purpose. Sometimes, you may find that your schoolwork is the center. You are so driven to succeed and do well in school that you may prioritize it over your health, Salah or family-time. Other times, it may be your social life. You value what your peers think so much that it drives you to behave and look a certain way to appease them over your own comfort. Or, it may be family and its cultural beliefs, putting them above logic and reason.



While academics, friends and family are all essential parts of your life, they are not the most important. As a Muslim, your goal is to put Allah ﷻ at the center of your life. You are to strive to please Him over your peer's influence, societal expectations and even over your own self.

## Why Should I Put Allah ﷻ at the Center of My Life?

Some cultures and religions, and even those who are Muslim, put only fear of God in their followers' hearts. They describe Him as being scary, angry and unapproachable. But in Islam, Allah ﷻ is none of those attributes. His names reflect His mercy, justice and peace. One name in particular is *Al Wadud*, The Most Loving.

And He is the Forgiving, the Loving.

(Surat Al Burooj 85:14)

﴿وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ﴾ [سورة البروج 85:14]

So, seek your Lord's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance.

Surely my Lord is Most Merciful, All—Loving.

(Surat Hud 11:90)

﴿وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ﴾ [سورة هود 90:11]

Not only does *Al Wadud* mean that Allah ﷻ is loved by His servants, but also that He loves and feels affection towards you. According to Al Bayhaqi *Al Wadud* means "He Who intends the best for His Allies".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Al Ghazali said, "Al Wadud is He Who loves good for all of creation, and treats them in the best manner and commends them. It is close in meaning to *Al Rahman* (the Merciful)".<sup>2</sup>

There are many ways that Allah ﷻ shows His love for you, such as the following:

**1. Through His rulings.** Allah's ﷻ rulings are not meant to keep you from fun or to restrict you; they are there to keep you safe and bring peace to your life. They are proof that He is holding your best interests in mind. Learning about the consequences of certain actions, such as consuming alcohol, committing *zinna* زنا or lying can help you realize why Allah ﷻ is preventing them from you in the first place.

O, people! There has come to you advice from your Lord, and healing for what is in the hearts, and guidance and mercy for believers.

(Surat Yunus 10:57)

﴿يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ [سورة يونس 57:10]

**2. Through His mercy for you.** Allah ﷻ gives you opportunities to excel to make things easy for you. He has given you Ramadan, in which rewards are multiplied. In it is a night better than a thousand months, *Layla-tul Qadr* ليلة القدر, where Allah ﷻ will forgive you and grant you whatever you ask that is good for you. If you fast the six days of *Shawwal* شوال following *Ramadan* رمضان, He gives you the reward of fasting all year. When you fast on the Day of *Ashura* عاشوراء, your previous year's sins are forgiven, or on the Day of *Arafah* عرفة, your previous and current years' sins are forgiven. If you perform Hajj, all of your sins are forgiven. When you give in charity, He increases your wealth. If you struggle to read the Qur'an, He rewards you extra for your efforts. When you are on your menses or post-partum *nifaas* نفاس, He waives Salah. He promises that if you sincerely seek His forgiveness, He will forgive you. If you intend to do a good deed but fail to carry it out, He still rewards you for it. If you intend to commit a sin but change your mind, He rewards you for it.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)

from what he has related from his Lord:

Verily Allah has written down the good deeds and the evil deeds,  
and then explained it [by saying]:

"Whosoever intended to perform a good deed, but did not do it,  
then Allah writes it down with Himself as a complete good deed.

And if he intended to perform it and then did perform it,  
then Allah writes it down with Himself as from ten good deeds  
up to seven hundred times, up to many times multiplied.

And if he intended to perform an evil deed, but did not do it,  
then Allah writes it down with Himself as a complete good deed.

And if he intended it [i.e., the evil deed] and then performed it,  
then Allah writes it down as one evil deed".

(Al Bukhari)

عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِيَمَا يَرُويهِ عَنْ رَبِّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى، قَالَ: «إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَتَبَ الْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ، ثُمَّ بَيَّنَّ ذَلِكَ، فَمَنْ هَمَّ بِحَسَنَةٍ فَلَمْ يَعْمَلْهَا كَتَبَهَا اللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حَسَنَةً كَامِلَةً، وَإِنْ هَمَّ بِهَا فَعَمَلَهَا كَتَبَهَا اللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ عَشْرَ حَسَنَاتٍ إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةٍ ضَعْفٍ إِلَى أَضْعَافٍ كَثِيرَةٍ، وَإِنْ هَمَّ بِسَيِّئَةٍ فَلَمْ يَعْمَلْهَا كَتَبَهَا اللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حَسَنَةً كَامِلَةً، وَإِنْ هَمَّ بِهَا فَعَمَلَهَا كَتَبَهَا اللَّهُ سَيِّئَةً وَاحِدَةً». رواه البخاري

**3. Through His tests.** Allah's ﷺ tests for you are one of His greatest acts of love for you. Tests have the potential to make you a better you; to build self-awareness and draw you closer to Him. The more He tests you, the greater His love for you.

“O Messenger of Allah, which people are tested most severely?”

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

‘They are the prophets, then the next best, then the next best.

A man is put to trial according to his religion.

If he is firm in his religion, his trials will be more severe.

If he is weak in his religion, he is put to trial according to his strength in religion.

The servant will continue to be put to trial

until he is left walking upon the earth without any sin”.

(At-Tirmidhi)

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً؟ قَالَ ﷺ: «الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَلِأَمْثَلِ يُبْتَلَى الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ صُلْبًا اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةٌ ابْتُلِيَ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَمَا يَبْرُحُ الْبَلَاءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَهُ يَمْشِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَمَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَطِيئَةٍ». رواه الترمذي

When you can recognize the immense love Allah ﷻ has for you, you will naturally want to love what He loves and avoid what He hates. By doing so, you are guaranteeing success in your life and in your Hereafter.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

“Whoever has three traits within himself will find the sweetness of faith:

one who loves Allah and His Messenger more than anything else,

one who loves a servant only for the sake of Allah,

and one who hates to turn back to unbelief after Allah has saved him,

just as he hates to be thrown into the fire”.

(Al Bukhari)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا، وَأَنْ يُحِبَّ الْمَرْءَ لَا يُحِبُّهُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ، وَأَنْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُقَذَّفَ فِي النَّارِ». رواه البخاري

### How Can I Put Allah ﷻ at the Center of My Life?

All humans have moments of weakness and, yet, Allah ﷻ continues to provide, bless and keep the doors of mercy open for you. Let His love be your driving force to always put Him above all else.

## Your Four Enemies<sup>3</sup>

You have four enemies:

1. **The Temporary World:** Its weapon is making you hungry for popularity. Control it by spending time alone with Allah ﷻ.
2. **Shaytaan:** His weapon is to make you crave things. Control it by fasting.
3. **Your Soul:** Its weapon is making you sleep. Control it by observing tahajjud and dua' before *fajr* فجر.
4. **Your Desires:** Its weapon is speech. Control it with silence.

Some may take His love for granted. Ongoing and guilt-free sinful behavior could lead to questioning religion, the purpose of life and even the existence of God. As Muslims, you are to have a balance of both the hope in Allah's ﷻ mercy and the fear in disobeying Him.

Imam Ibn Al Qayyim Al Jawziyyah said,  
"The heart in its journey towards Allah ﷻ  
is like a bird whose head is love,  
and hope and fear are its two wings".<sup>4</sup>

In this famous saying, when the head and the two wings are sound and healthy, then the bird is able to fly. When the head is cut off, it cannot survive, and when either or both wings are deficient, the bird cannot fly properly.

This chapter will look at some ways to keep Allah ﷻ at the center of your life in order to prevent you from disobedience and religious doubt. This includes learning to put Allah ﷻ above your desires, as well as understanding negative influences from family and culture.



## SECTION 1:

# ALLAH ﷻ ABOVE DESIRES

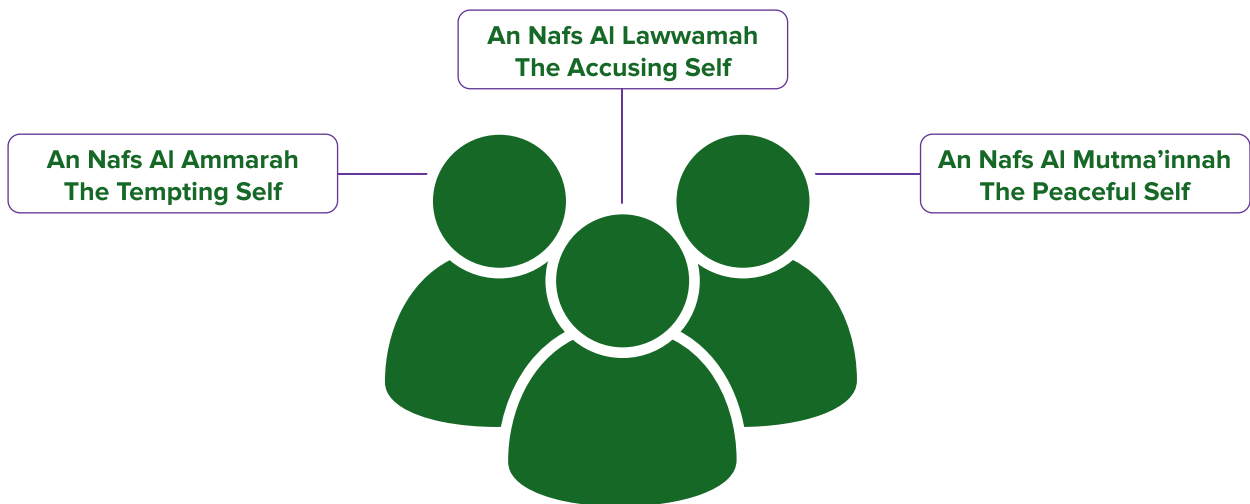
An **Nafs** النفس is the desires within your own self. In psychology, they are referred to as the **Self**, or your conscious mind or ego. At times, An Nafs may align with what Allah ﷻ wants for you; others times, they may not. The goal is to strive to control An Nafs through the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.

And remember your Lord inside your self [nafs]... .  
(Surat Al A'raf 7:205)

﴿وَأذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ...﴾ [سورة الأعراف 7:205]

An Nafs can operate at one of the following three states:

- **An Nafs Al Ammarah** النفس الامارة بالسوء (The Tempting Self): To put all desires at the center of your life
- **An Nafs Al Lawwamah** النفس اللوامة (The Accusing Self): To regretfully put sinful desires at the center of your life
- **An Nafs Al Mutma'innah** النفس المطمئنة (The Peaceful Self): To put the desires that are only pleasing to Allah ﷻ at the center of your life



## A. AN NAFS AL AMMARAH: THE INCITING SELF

An Nafs Al Ammarah is when An Nafs rule over you.<sup>5</sup> They command you and you blindly follow them. You feel no reason to suppress your desires, nor do you feel bad for fulfilling them.



...Indeed, the nafs that overwhelmingly commands a person to do sin... .  
(Surat Yusuf 12:53)

﴿...إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ...﴾ [سورة يوسف 12:53]

When An Nafs controls you, it becomes your moral compass for what is right and wrong.  
It becomes your God.

Have you seen him who has taken as his ilaah [god]  
his own vain desire...? (Surat Al Furqan 25:43)

﴿أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ...﴾ [سورة الفرقان 25:43]

### Activity 1: Societal Movements and An Nafs Al Ammarah

In today's time, many societies idolize the individual with little regard to the One who made the individual. Movements are created that prioritize your desires over God and termed autonomy, or 'to give oneself the law'. However, they are fluid and depend on whatever is popular or on-trend, unlike the deeply rooted values in religion that never change and fit all times and all cultures.

When people follow such fluid movements without thinking about the consequences, they merely become followers, like cattle.

Have you seen him who has taken as his ilaah [god] his own vain desire?  
Would you then be a disposer of his affairs or a watcher?  
Or do you think that most of them hear or understand?  
They are only like cattle; nay, they are even farther astray from the Path.  
(Surat Al Furqan 25:43-44)

﴿أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلاً﴾  
﴿أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلاً﴾  
[سورة الفرقان 25:43-44]

They think they are acting with wisdom by choosing the guidance from creation rather than the Creator.

1. What movements today encourage people to follow their desires?
2. How can these movements impact the way you feel about yourself?
3. If you disagree with such movements, what is the reaction by the "cattle," or the masses that follow them?

## I'm Spiritual but Not Religious

Some people explain their personal beliefs by saying they are spiritual but not religious. While this can mean different things to different people, it typically means a person who believes in a Higher Being but not in organized religion. Rather than following a religion that tells them what is right and wrong, they choose moral independence based on their desires.

“What’s wrong with new age ‘spirituality’?  
It demands very little while promising so much.  
It gives pleasure while demanding no sacrifice.

The foundation of real spiritual ascension is  
self-discipline, obedience and submission...  
nothing you’ll find on a bumper sticker.  
It is subduing ego and passion to ethics and piety.  
It is hard and boring and not at all sexy.  
It demands denial of urges, to not obey your thirst, to not ‘just do it’.  
It has no tag line, no logo, no celebrity endorsement.  
Just slow, consistent, painstaking effort and in secret.

Just you and your demons and God in conversation.  
It is uncomfortable.  
Real spirituality leaves you spent, raw, exposed and pliant.  
It demands uncompromising sincerity.  
It scares you.  
But it is the only path Home”.<sup>6</sup>

## B. AN NAFS AL LAWWAMAH: THE ACCUSING SELF

An Nafs Al Lawwamah is to sometimes succumb to An Nafs, but it follows with feelings of remorse.<sup>5</sup> A majority of Muslims fall into this category. It is too much of a struggle or effort to avoid sinful desires, but at the same time, you feel bad when you fulfill them. The guilty feeling that remains usually motivates you to seek forgiveness and make efforts to leave the sin.

*And I swear by the reproaching soul.  
(Surat Al Qiyamah 75:2)*

﴿وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالتَّفْئِيسِ اللّٰوَامَةِ﴾ [سورة القيامة 75:2]

## How Can I Take Control of My Sinful Desires?

Not every desire is healthy or good for you, especially when they compromise your morals and beliefs. However, they can be hard to control. Sinful desires come from many forces such as upbringing, societal influence, peer pressure, lack of knowledge, lack of faith, attachment to this world and Shaytaan's deceptions.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said while delivering a sermon one day,  
"Behold my Lord commanded me to teach you that which you do not know  
and which He has taught me today.

[He stated that] the property that ﷻ [Allah] have conferred upon them is lawful for them.  
ﷻ have created My Servants all having a natural inclination to the worship of Allah,  
but the devil comes to them and turns them away from their [true] religion.  
He makes unlawful what ﷻ declared lawful for them  
and he commanded them to ascribe partners with Me  
for which no authority has been sent down". (Muslim)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ فِي خُطْبَتِهِ «أَلَا إِنَّ رَبِّي أَمَرَنِي أَنْ أُعَلِّمَكُم مَّا جَهِلْتُمْ مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي يَوْمِي هَذَا كُلُّ مَالٍ نَحَلْتُهُ عَبْدًا حَلَالٌ وَإِنِّي خَلَقْتُ عِبَادِي حُنَفَاءَ كُلَّهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ أَتَتْهُمْ الشَّيَاطِينُ فَاجْتَالَتْهُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِمْ وَحَرَمَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا أَحَلَّلْتُ لَهُمْ وَأَمَرْتَهُمْ أَنْ يُشْرِكُوا بِي مَا لَمْ أَنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا...». رواه مسلم

A powerful deception of Shaytaan is when committing acts of disobedience.

...And Shaytaan beautified for them their acts and, thus, blocked them from the Path, though they were discerning. (Surat Al 'Ankabut 29:38)

﴿... وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ﴾ [سورة العنكبوت 38:29]

It is, then, the one for whom the evil of his deeds has been beautified [by Shaytaan]— so he sees them as good [like the one whom Allah has guided]? Verily, Allah sends astray whom he wills, and guides whom he wills... . (Surat Faatir 35:8)

﴿أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ...﴾ [سورة فاطر 35:8]

Some engage in sinful desires as a form of self-care or to avoid a greater sin, such as the following:

*"Wearing tight clothes gives me confidence".*

*"Drinking brings out my personality and helps me make friends".*

*"Watching pornography controls my sexual urges".*

*"When I date, it makes me feel less lonely".*

*"Gossiping is therapeutic for me".*

This is likened to the saying, “two wrongs do not make a right,”.

Thomas Stephen Szasz, a well-known psychiatrist, famously said,  
“Two wrongs do not make a right, but they make a good excuse”.

Shaytaan makes you think that you are doing right by your sin, but ultimately, they come at a price. Without repentance and self-reflection, they can lead you on a downward spiral of trouble, disappointment, regret and emptiness. They may even leave you feeling spiritually dead.

Ibn Katheer said,

“His life will be hard in this world.

He will have no tranquility and no expanding of his breast (ease).

Rather, his chest will be constrained and in difficulty due to his misguidance.

Even if he appears to be in comfort outwardly and he wears whatever he likes, eats whatever he likes, and lives where he wants, he will not be happy.

For verily, his heart will not have pure certainty and guidance.

He will be in agitation, bewilderment, and doubt.

He will always be in confusion and a state of uncertainty.

This is from the hardship of life”.<sup>7</sup>

*An Nafs is the battle that never ends.  
Control it before it controls you.*

Fulfilling sinful desires also commonly comes from moments of weakness. When you have strong urges to engage in sinful desires, it is important to find ways to train yourself to control them. Some tips include the following:

**1. Seek refuge from your sinful desires.** The Prophet (ﷺ) advised his daughter, Fatima to say the following in the morning and evening:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to Fatima (رضي الله عنها), “O, Fatima, What is preventing you from listening to what I recommend to you? To say in the morning and in the evening:  
O Ever-Living, O Ever-Sustaining, by Your Mercy I seek help, rectify all my affairs for me, and do not leave me to myself for the blink of an eye”. (An-Nisa’i)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ لِفَاتِمَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا: «مَا يَمْنَعُكَ أَنْ تَسْمَعِي مَا أوصيكُ بِهِ، أَنْ تَقُولِي إِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ وَإِذَا أَمْسَيْتِ: يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ بِرَحْمَتِكَ أَسْتَغِيثُ، أَصْلِحْ لِي شَأْنِي كُلَّهُ، وَلَا تَكُنِّي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ»  
رواه النسائي

**2. Use your free-will to fight off An Nafs.** All humans are created with free-will. **Free-Will** means to have a choice to accept or reject Allah ﷻ and His rulings.

## Free Will Is Unique to Humans

Angels and animals are not created with free will. Angels have a mind without desires, while animals have a limited mind controlled by their desires. Humans, on the other hand, are somewhere in between—you have a mind, desires and free will.

Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and  
the earth and the mountains,  
but they [all] declined to bear it, being fearful of it.  
But humanity assumed it,  
for they are truly wrongful to  
themselves and ignorant of the consequences.

(Surat Al Ahzab 33:72)

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ  
كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا﴾ [سورة الأحزاب 33:72]

By choosing to accept Allah ﷻ and His rulings you have the potential to transcend the status of the angels. If not, you may transcend below the status of an animal.

We have certainly created man in the best of stature;  
then We return him to the lowest of the low,  
Except for those who believe and do  
righteous deeds, for they will have  
a reward uninterrupted. (Surat At-Tin 95: 4-6)

﴿لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ﴾ ﴿ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ﴾ ﴿إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ﴾ [سورة التين 95:4-6]



Free-will is a unique inherent quality in human beings. It provides you with certain characteristics to either turn towards or away from Allah ﷻ. It is why a person of disbelief and hatred for Islam can become one of the most devout and righteous servants, and why a person of belief can take a wrong turn, leave Islam and die on kufr.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "...By Allah, other than Whom there is no deity, verily one of you performs the actions of the people of Paradise until there is but an arm's length between him and it, and that which has been written overtakes him, and so he acts with the actions of the people of the Hellfire and thus enters it; and verily one of you performs the actions of the people of the Hellfire, until there is but an arm's length between him and it, and that which has been written overtakes him and so he acts with the actions of the people of Paradise and thus he enters it". (Al Bukhari)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «...فَوَاللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّىٰ مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا. وَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حَتَّىٰ مَا يَكُونُ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلَّا ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا».. رواه البخاري

The characteristics of free will are best illustrated in the story of the first human beings, Prophet Adam (عليه السلام) and Hawwa (Surat Al Baqarah, verses 30-39) as follows:<sup>8</sup>

## Characteristics of Free Will:

### Free Will Makes You Unique.

You, unlike angels and animals, are made with free will and can choose to obey or not obey.

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels,  
"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority".

They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?"

Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know".

(Surat Al Baqara 2:30)

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة 2:30)

**How to use this quality:** Empower yourself through the obedience of Allah ﷻ over whatever is popular or on-trend; it will make you unique and stand out.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

"Islam began as a something strange and it will return to being strange, so blessed are the strangers". (Muslim)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «بَدَأَ الْإِسْلَامُ غَرِيبًا، وَسَيَعُودُ كَمَا بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ».. رواه مسلم

## Free Will Makes You Capable.

Free will gives you the ability to learn and understand to separate Truth from Falsehood.

And He taught Adam the names—all of them.

Then He showed them to the angels and said,

“Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful”.

They said, “Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us.

Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise”.

He said, “O Adam, inform them of their names”.

And when He had informed them of their names,

He said, “Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed”.

(Surat Al Baqara 2:31-33)

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾  
﴿قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾  
﴿قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾  
﴿وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:31-33]

**How to use this quality:** Educate yourself on the wisdom of Allah’s ﷻ rulings, especially the ones that you struggle with the most. For example, learn about the spiritual, psychological and mental effects of watching pornography.

## Free Will Makes You Significant.

All that is in the earth—its resources and its animals—are for you. Your significance can best be felt when you do right by not harming yourself or others.

And [mention] when We said to the angels,

“Prostrate before Adam”.

So, they prostrated, except for Iblees.

He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers. (Surat Al Baqara 2:34)

﴿وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:34]

**How to use this quality:** Reflect on how your actions and mannerisms affect not only yourself but others around you. For example, backbiting and slandering are major sins; with just a few words, they can damage another person’s reputation for life.

## Free Will Makes You Vulnerable.

Despite being unique, significant and capable, you are still vulnerable to your desires.

And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers".

But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been.

And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time".

(Surat Al Baqara 2:35-36)

﴿وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ ﴿فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:35-36]

**How to use this quality:** Acknowledge your vulnerability to sin by admitting you cannot do this alone. Surround yourself with support systems, such as family and friends, who can offer you help, advice, and guidance when you feel weak.

## Free Will Gives You Potential.

You have the potential to overcome your desires. This is through seeking forgiveness and abiding by halal outlets Allah ﷻ has given you.

Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words... (Surat Al Baqara 2:37)

﴿فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ...﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:37]

Our Lord, We have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us we will certainly be losers. (Surat Al A'raf 7: 23)

﴿قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾ [سورة الأعراف 7:23]

...and He accepted his repentance.

Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

(Surat Al Baqara 2:37)

﴿... فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:37]

**How to use this quality:** Seek forgiveness from Allah ﷻ for the sinful actions that you are currently struggling with. Create a plan on how you can overcome them and make dua' to Allah ﷻ to help you persevere.



In the story of Prophet Yusuf (عليه السلام), he proactively refused the the wife of the captain of king's guard by running away from her. Despite the difficulty in fighting off his own urges, he feared Allah ﷻ. Anyone in a similar situation who refuses such advances out of fear of Allah ﷻ will be granted the shade of Allah ﷻ on the Day of Judgment.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Seven [people] will be shaded by Allah by His Shade on the Day of Resurrection when there will be no shade except His Shade. [They will be], a just ruler, a young man who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, a man who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes are then flooded with tears, a man whose heart is attached to mosques [offers his compulsory congregational prayers in the mosque], two men who love each other for Allah's Sake, a man who is called by a charming lady of noble birth to commit illegal sexual intercourse with her, and he says, 'I am afraid of Allah,' and [finally], a man who gives in charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given". (Al Bukhari)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: ((سَبْعَةٌ يُظِلُّهُمْ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِي ظِلِّهِ، يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ، وَشَابٌّ نَشَأَ فِي عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ، وَرَجُلٌ ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ فِي خَلَاءٍ فَفَاضَتْ عَيْنَاهُ، وَرَجُلٌ مَعْلَقٌ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ، وَرَجُلَانِ تَحَابَّا فِي اللَّهِ، وَرَجُلٌ دَعَتْهُ امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ مَنْصِبٍ وَجَمَالَ إِلَى نَفْسِهَا قَالَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ. وَرَجُلٌ تَصَدَّقَ بِصَدَقَةٍ فَأَخْفَاهَا، حَتَّى لَا تَعْلَمَ شِمَالُهُ مَا صَنَعَتْ يَمِينُهُ)).  
رواه البخاري

## Free Will Gives You The Choice To Follow Allah's ﷻ Guidance.

When you choose to believe and obey in Allah ﷻ, you are choosing a life of success in this world and the Hereafter.

We said, "Go down from it, all of you.  
And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance—there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs—those will be companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally".  
(Surat Al Baqara 2:38-39)



﴿قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾  
﴿وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾ [سورة البقرة 2:38-39]

**How to use this quality:** Trust the decree and wisdom of Allah ﷻ. At the same time, remember that no one is perfect, so when you slip up and make mistakes, seek forgiveness, and try again.

## Activity 2: Using the Qualities of Free Will to Better Your Relationship With Allah ﷻ

What are some ways you can embrace the characteristics of free will to overcome sinful desires?

3. Base your self-worth off of actions that please Allah ﷻ. Be proud of yourself when you start improving your *deen* دين (religion) after previously not making the best choices. It is not easy, but taking that step is a way of putting your love for Allah ﷻ into action.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Prophet Dawud (عليه السلام) would make this dua':  
'O Allah! I ask you for your Divine Love, and the love of those who love You,  
and the deeds that will draw me to Your Love!

O Allah! Make [my desire] for your Love more beloved to me  
than myself and my family and cold water!'" (At-Tirmidhi)

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: ((كَانَ مِنْ دُعَاءِ دَاوُدَ يَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ يُحِبُّكَ وَالْعَمَلَ الَّذِي يُبَلِّغُنِي حُبَّكَ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ نَفْسِي وَأَهْلِي وَمِنَ الْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ)). رواه الترمذي

It is important to note that engaging in sins may also be a form of self-destructive behavior, a common side effect of unresolved past trauma. Talking with a mental health professional can help you find healthy coping mechanisms that work for you.

## C. AN NAFS AL MUTMA'INNAH: THE PEACEFUL SELF

An Nafs Al Mutma'innah means that An Nafs are content with whatever Allah ﷻ permits, and they avoid whatever He prohibits.<sup>5</sup>

To the righteous it will be said, "Oh reassured soul, return to your Lord well pleased, and pleasing to Him". (Surat Al Fajr 89:27-28)

﴿يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ﴾ ﴿ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً﴾ [سورة الفجر 27-28:89]

*Mutma'in* مطمئن means peace from doing sin and desiring sin.<sup>5</sup> This requires effort; in the same way that you discipline yourself to get good grades and train hard in sports, you are to also discipline yourself to stay away from sinful desires until it can become second nature.

Mutma'in shares the root letters with mu'min. A **Mu'min** مؤمن is a Muslim whose faith (iman) has settled in their heart. It is only for Allah ﷻ to say who is a mu'min since iman is through intention and, only Allah ﷻ knows your intentions.

Arabs said, "We are Mu'mins [believers]". Say, You have not believed; what you should say is, 'We are Muslims [submitters],' until belief is established in your hearts... .  
(Surat Al Hujurat 49:14)

﴿قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...﴾ [سورة الحجرات 14:49]

A mu'min is one who has achieved An Nafs Al mutma'innah. Their desires align with what is halal, and they do not crave what is sinful.

## When 'Umar bin Al Khattab (رضي الله عنه) Removed Himself from the Center of His Life

'Abdullah bin Hisham (رضي الله عنه) reported,  
"We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)  
and he was holding the hand of 'Umar bin Al Khattab (رضي الله عنه).

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah,  
you are more beloved to me than everything but myself'.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'No, by the one in whose hand is my soul,  
until I am more beloved to you than yourself'.

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) said, 'Indeed, I swear by Allah  
that you are more beloved to me now than myself'.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Now you are right, O 'Umar'".  
(Al Bukhari)

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ هِشَامٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: كُنَّا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ: وَهُوَ آخِذٌ بِيَدِ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ عُمَرُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَأَنْتَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا مِنْ نَفْسِي. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «لَا وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ حَتَّى أَكُونَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ». فَقَالَ لَهُ عُمَرُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: فَإِنَّهُ الْآنَ وَاللَّهِ لَأَنْتَ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ نَفْسِي. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «(الآنَ يَا عُمَرُ)». رواه البخاري

In this authentic hadith, 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) thought that self-love is to love yourself more than anyone else. However, the Prophet (ﷺ) redefines self-love by saying that Islam comes even before your own self. If your wants and desires contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah, then you are to leave them. You are to trust Allah ﷻ over your own self-interests.

When 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) was made aware of this, he corrected his statement: he said that the Prophet (ﷺ) was dearer to him than his own soul.

### Activity 3: Allah ﷻ Versus Your Desires

In a private journal entry, write about a time when you felt torn between wanting to fulfill a sinful desire and obeying Allah ﷻ.