



سورة الحجرات

Surah al-Hujurat

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Facilitator's Notes

- The following verses have been split into four, to be delivered across four sessions:
 - Verses 1-5
 - Verses 6-10
 - Verses 11-13
 - Verses 14-18
- Play one of the following clips whilst the attendees are arriving:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIYHqs9jL2k>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpUIPq4ZTok>
- Worksheets have been prepared as an accompanying guide to this resource.
- This resource contains 'Guided by the Qur'an' stories which show how the Companions (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhum) directly implemented Qur'anic Guidance, allowing them to transform themselves and their societies.
- Encourage all participants to bring a small journal to record the du'ās they wish to add to their personal du'ā' list as they progress through the sūrah.
- Encourage all participants to memorise the sūrah so that they can recite in their ṣalāh and taste its sweetness.
- These are not tafsīr sessions; rather they are designed to help participants reflect and think. As a facilitator, avoid dominating the discussion. Allow participants enough time to listen to each other.
- As you engage with the material, participants should ask themselves: What is Allah telling me? What is Allah asking me to do? How can I apply Allah's words to my life?
- Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullāh) said, "If you want to benefit from the Qur'ān, gather your heart when it is recited, focus your hearing, and act like you are being directly addressed by Allah, as it is an address from Him to you upon the tongue of His Messenger. Allah said, 'Indeed there is a reminder in that for whoever has a heart or whoever listens attentively with his heart present' (50:37)."

Introduction to the Surah

- Sūrah al-Hujurāt is the 49th surah of the Qur'an and it was revealed in Madinah.
- It is the surah which covers the **ethical framework of relationships**: with Allah, with the Prophet ﷺ, with the believers and with humanity at large
- It was revealed in the 9th year after hijrah; the year of delegations ('ām al-wuḍūd). People came in delegations pledging allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ; the growth of Islam was exponential during this period.
- Civilisations stand and fall based on their ethical framework. Your adab (etiquettes/manners) can make or break your faith.

Link to the Previous Surah

1. The previous Sūrah (Sūrah al-Fath) discussed the incident of Ḥudaybiyyah, and it was proof that the decisions of Allah and His Messenger are always the best and should be followed:
 - The polytheists of Makkah were excessive in their demands and conditions:
 - To erase the basmalah from the written treaty after it had been written, out of arrogance and disdain, saying, "We do not know 'the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.'" They demanded that it be replaced with "In Your name, O God," according to their pre-Islamic custom.
 - To delete the words "Messenger of God". They said, "If we knew you were the Messenger of God, we would not have fought you."
 - To not perform 'umrah in the current year, even though they had brought their sacrificial animals and were extremely close to the Ka'bah
 - The Muslims were deeply distressed by this and by other forms of obstinacy and extreme rigidity shown by the polytheists. To accept this treaty (which had terms and conditions apparently humiliating to the Muslims) at its face value was quite a test for the faithful Companions. The incident that had disheartened the Muslims as defeat was thus referred to as victory by Allah, and later developments revealed it truly was.
 - Surah al-Hujurāt was therefore revealed after the Companions (rādiy Allāhu 'anhum) had witnessed the signs of God, after the vision of the noble Messenger of performing tawaf with his companions had been fulfilled, and after they entered the Sacred Mosque in safety.
2. Sūrah al-Fath ends by mentioning the lofty status of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and this Sūrah starts with the respect that the Messenger ﷺ deserves:
 - Describing him as 'His Messenger' who makes His religion prevail over all others: (48:28).

Key Themes

- **Establishing the morals of an Islamic society.**
- Educating believers and instructing them to revere Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, and respect His creation
- Purifying the Muslim community from harmful and serious behaviours — such as mockery, offensive nicknames, evil suspicion, spying, and backbiting — that not only damage individuals and relationships but also have wider consequences for society as a whole.
- Explaining the wisdom behind the creation of people into different nations and tribes, and clarifying that true superiority in the sight of God is through piety alone.
- Clarifying the greatness of īmān, and that it is not merely a claim a person makes; rather, it is something that settles in the heart and is affirmed by speech, action, and striving in the cause of God Most High.

Part 1 (Verses 1-5)

Verse 1

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٤)

O believers! O you who believe, do not proceed ahead of Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

Reason for Revelation:

"The two righteous ones were almost ruined — Abu Bakr and 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (radiy Allāhu 'anhumā) — when the delegation of Banī Tamīm came to the Nabī ﷺ. One of them suggested appointing **al-Aqrā' b. Ḥabis al-Tamīmī al-Ḥanẓalī**, the brother of Banī Mujāshi', while the other suggested someone else.

Abū Bakr (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) said to 'Umar (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu), "You only wanted to oppose me" 'Umar (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) replied, "I did not intend to oppose you." Their voices then rose in the presence of the Nabī ﷺ, and this āyah was revealed.

After this incident, whenever 'Umar (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) spoke to the Nabī ﷺ, he would speak so quietly, like someone whispering privately, that Nabī ﷺ sometimes had to ask him to repeat himself in order to hear him." (Adapted from Ahmad 16133)

Lā tuqaddimū:

There are three opinions regarding the meaning of '*lā tuqaddimū*:

1. Do not speak about a matter before the Prophet ﷺ speaks about it, and do not decide on any matter except after his consideration.
2. Do not put forward leaders in his presence, for he appoints whomever he wishes.
3. Do not walk ahead of him when he walks.

This verse highlights a fundamental aspect of our faith: submitting to Allah and His Messenger. However, submission only comes through knowing Your Lord and His Messenger. Once you know your Lord, you will know your place and your limits. Knowing Your Lord and having strong īmān, should show in your actions.

Guided by the Qur'an

The companions (rađiy Allāhu 'anhum) understood and internalised this. When the Prophet ﷺ sent Mu'ādh (rađiy Allāhu 'anhu) to Yemen, he asked him: "How will you judge?" Mu'ādh replied, "I will judge according to what is in the Book of Allah." The Prophet ﷺ said: "What if it is not in the Book of Allah?" Mu'ādh replied, "Then with the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah." The Prophet said: "What if it is not in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah?" Mu'ādh said, "Then I will strive to form an opinion (ijtihād)." The Prophet said: "All praise is All praise is for Allah who enabled the messenger of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to do what pleases the Messenger of Allah."¹

- O believers (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا):
 - What is about to come in the verse is the qualities of the believer.
 - 'Abdullāh b. Masū'd (rađiy Allāhu 'anhu): Whenever you hear 'O believers', pay attention as this is your Lord summoning you so give Him your undivided attention as He is about to tell you something that is good for you or cautioning you against something that is bad for you.
 - The expression "those who believe" was chosen to address the believers in order to stir their religious zeal, awaken their attachment and submission to the One who made faith beloved to them and adorned it in their hearts, and who made disbelief, wickedness, and disobedience hateful to them. Nothing is dearer to their souls than this beloved call and this noble attribute from their Great and Generous Lord.
- لا تُنَقَّدُمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ is the foundation of the dīn: prioritise Allah and His Messenger in everything. This structure that Islam gives us is very liberating.
- Every Muslim is obligated to check first. The voice of the Prophet ﷺ should be above all other voices, and his word is the leading word and its guide. His Sunnah stands above all laws and human desires.
- Believers must not speak before the Prophet speaks, nor act before he commands; this is the essence of the proper etiquette required with God and His Messenger. It is the hallmark of a servant's true happiness and success, and missing it leads to the loss of eternal bliss and everlasting reward.
- This is a strong prohibition against putting your own opinion or action ahead of the Prophet's ﷺ. Once the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ is established, it must be followed and given precedence over any other opinion or action.



Reflect

Have you made a sincere effort to learn about the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ on relevant topics to your life, so that you are aligned with his opinion and preferences?

¹ وعن ناس من أصحاب معاذ من أهل حمص ، عن معاذ أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم حين بعثه إلى اليمن قال : "كيف تصنع إن عرض لك قضاء ؟" قال : أقضى بما في كتاب الله . قال : "فإن لم يكن في كتاب الله ؟" قال : فبستنة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم . قال : "فإن لم يكن في سنة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ؟" . قال : أجتهد برأيي ، لا آلو . قال : فضرب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم صدري ثم قال : "الحمد لله الذي وفق رسول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لما يرضي رسول الله" Sunan At-Tirmidhi 1327, Grade: Sahih

- Have taqwā of Allah; this is our constant reminder and is the key to salvation in this life and the next.
- Fearing Allah is a means of spiritual purification.
- Whoever doesn't check what Allah and His Messenger has said about a topic; this is a sign of spiritual corruption
- سَمِيعٌ عَلَيْهِ: He hears what you express openly and knows what lies within your inner selves. So fear His punishment and beware of His might, for He hears your words and knows your intentions and actions. Therefore, He alone deserves to be feared.



Reflect

What aspect of the dīn do you find difficult to submit to? Why? How can this verse help you?



Activity

What would the following look like if everyone prioritised the command of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ:

1. Individual
2. Families/Social circles
3. Society
4. World

Verse 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرٍ
بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَنْ تَخْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

O believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak loudly to him as you do to one another, or your deeds will become void while you are unaware.

- This is the second etiquette Allah is teaching the believers.

- Allah is reminding the believers of the status of the Prophet ﷺ and thus to not be casual with him, and instead address him in the appropriate respectful manner with a lowered voice, and with the appropriate titles. (See 24:63)
- It is not limited to not raising your voice in front of the Prophet ﷺ, but also encompasses every Sunnah established by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ
- The Messenger ﷺ had many responsibilities. He received revelation from his Lord, conveyed it and explained it; he governed the Muslims in their worldly affairs and their Hereafter; he thought constantly about their dignity and how to ward harm away from them; he considered how to deal with those who fought him and those who made peace with him; and he reflected on how to secure goodness for the Muslims. Despite all of this, he was human: harshness hurt him, and roughness disturbed his heart. One who is in such a state deserves to be granted calm and serenity, and to be kept away from anything that unsettles the mind.
- Allah trained the Companions in this manner with the Messenger ﷺ and forbade them from harshness. One of the purposes of this prohibition was to restrain them and instill within them the habit of gentleness and courtesy in speech, and to ensure that this habit extends to their dealings with him and with others. Thus, just as this etiquette applies in relation to the Messenger ﷺ, it is also an etiquette governing the believers in their interactions with one another.



Act

What one thing will you do to improve the way or manner in which you speak?

لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ

There are three interpretations to this:

1. Don't raise your voice
2. Don't speak excessively: the one who speaks excessively is speaking while others are silent, and during their silence his voice is effectively raised, even if it is not loud in itself when viewed in isolation. Thus, no one should speak at length in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ in comparison to the Prophet's own speech, because the Prophet ﷺ is the conveyor of revelation.
3. Don't speak in a tone of self-importance: do not make your words superior to the words of the Prophet ﷺ, nor adopt a domineering tone.



Reflect

Do you fall into any of the above interpretations? What can you do to improve?

Guided by the Qur'an

When Allah revealed the verse, "O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet," Thābit b. Qays (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu) entered his house, closed the door behind him, and began to weep. The Prophet ﷺ noticed his absence and sent for him, asking about his situation. He replied, "I am a man with a loud voice, and I fear that my deeds have been nullified."

He said, "You are not among them. You will live in goodness and die in goodness."

Then Allah revealed, "Indeed, God does not love every arrogant boaster," so he closed his door upon himself and began to weep. The Prophet ﷺ again noticed his absence and sent for him, and Thābit told him "I love beauty, and I love to be a leader among my people."

He said, "You are not among them. Rather, you will live praised, be killed as a martyr, and God will admit you into Paradise."

When the Day of al-Yamāmah came, he went out with Khālid b. al-Walīd (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) against Musaylimah the Liar. When the two sides met, the Muslims initially withdrew. Thābit and Sālim, the freedman of Abū Ḥudhayfah, said, "This is not how we used to fight during the time of the Messenger of God ﷺ." Then each of them dug a pit for himself, stood firm, and fought until they were killed.

On that day, Thābit was wearing a valuable coat of mail. A man from among the Muslims passed by and took it. Later, while a Muslim man was asleep, Thābit ibn Qays came to him and said, "I entrust you with a bequest. Beware of saying, 'This is only a dream,' and thus neglecting it. When I was killed yesterday, a man from among the Muslims passed by me; his dwelling is at the far end of the camp. Near his tent is a horse tethered on a long rope. He has placed a cooking pot over the armor, and above the pot is a saddle. Go to Khālid ibn al-Walīd and tell him to send someone to retrieve my armour.

And when you arrive in Madinah to the successor of the Messenger of God ﷺ, inform him that I owe such-and-such an amount in debt, and that so-and-so from among my slaves is to be freed."

The man went to Khālid ibn al-Walīd (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu) and informed him, so he sent for the armour and it was brought back. He then informed Abū Bakr (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu) of his vision, and Abū Bakr carried out his bequest. We do not know of anyone whose will was executed after his death except Thābit (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu).²



Reflect

What does respecting the Prophet ﷺ entail?

[Following his example; Respecting those who convey his words]

² الراوي : ابنة ثابت بن قيس بن شماس | المحدث : ابن النحاس | المصدر : مشارع الأشواق الصفحة أو الرقم : 1119 التخريج : أخرجه ابن أبي عاصم في ((الآحاد والمثاني)) (1320هـ)، والطبراني (2/70)، والحاكم (5036) جميعاً بحده.

أَنْ تَحْبَطْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

- Allah is warning the believers: some habits, at first, may be tolerated, but if they are repeated, they become habits, and thus the soul becomes negligent and this may result in a person doing things unconsciously without realising the harm.
- If you do not guard yourselves from the outset against improper actions, you will fall into them after they become habitual, and their negative effects will overwhelm you, precisely because repeated familiarity leads to carelessness, even though initially you would have acted with vigilance and restraint.
- *"Most great fires come from small sparks."*
- This verse emphasises the importance of having taqwā (always being aware of Allah) and protecting oneself from ghaflah (heedlessness).



Reflect

Which sins have you normalised and no longer notice?

- This shows that failing to follow proper etiquette in the Sharī'ah can cancel a person's good deeds without them realising it. A wise person becomes careful and cautious, avoiding even small mistakes, knowing that they could lead to loss of reward or punishment.

In the Sharī'ah, there is an important principle known as "blocking the means" (سد الذرائع), which means preventing harmful outcomes by stopping the small actions that can lead to greater sins or corruption. Islam does not only prohibit the final wrongdoing, but also closes the doors that may gradually lead to it, protecting both the individual and society from harm.



Activity Option 1

1. Identify a 'small sin'
2. What impact does this sin have on a) individual b) families/social circle c) society
3. What could this sin lead to?
4. What one thing will you do to block the path early?

Activity Option 2

1. Think of a big issue in society now
2. What small sin led to it?

Verse 3

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغْضُبُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣٤)

Indeed, those who lower their voices in the presence of Allah's Messenger are the ones whose hearts Allah has refined for righteousness. They will have forgiveness and a great reward.

- Allah has refined/tested their hearts: 'imtahana' refers to a trial or examination. It comes from a verbal form that emphasises intensity and thoroughness: Allah has rigorously tested their hearts. The lam (ل) in "for piety" (li-taqwā) indicates purpose: the testing is for the sake of cultivating piety in their hearts. In other words, Allah tests them so that they may become truly God-conscious and steadfast in righteousness.
- This testing can also be understood figuratively, meaning that the trials and exercises in obedience solidify piety in the heart so that the heart remains consistently God-fearing. It emphasises that true piety is visible through perseverance and practice, not just a temporary state.
- This verse indicates that true righteousness comes from the heart, as shown in the phrase "the ones whose hearts Allah has refined for righteousness."
- The Prophet ﷺ said "Taqwā (piety) is here," pointing to his chest³
- Taqwā: following Allah's commands + staying away from His prohibitions
- Taqwā is strengthened by continuously obeying Allah in times of both hardship and ease.

Guided by the Qur'an

Abū Hurayrah and Ibn 'Abbās (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhumā) said: When this verse was revealed, Abū Bakr would whisper to the Prophet ﷺ. And Ibn al-Zubayr (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) said: When this verse was revealed, whenever 'Umar (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) would speak to the Prophet ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ would have to ask him to repeat himself, because of how much he lowered his voice.



Act

Lower your voice when you visit the Prophet ﷺ's Masjid. Lower your voice in a gathering where his words are being said. Lower your voice in

³ التخريج: أخرجه البخاري (6064) مختصرًا، ومسلم (2564).

any gathering where Allah and His Messenger ﷺ are mentioned.
Lower your voice in the Masjid.



Act

Make this du'a' regularly:

اللَّهُمَّ وَاهْدِنِي لِأَحْسَنِ الْخُلُقِ لَا يَهْدِي لِأَحْسَنِهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ ، وَاصْرِفْ عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا لَا يَصْرِفْ
عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah, guide me to the best of morals/character. No one guides to the best of them except You. Protect me from evil deeds and evil character. No one protects from their evil except You.

مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًً عَظِيمً

- The reward is intentionally mentioned in an indefinite and unspecified form, which powerfully conveys the utmost degree of esteem and divine approval for those who revere the Messenger ﷺ. At the same time, it subtly alludes to the enormity of what those who raised their voices committed.

Verse 4

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادِونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُّرَاتِ أَكْثُرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤)

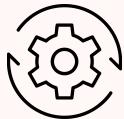
Indeed, most of those who call out to you (O Prophet) from outside (your) private quarters have no understanding (of manners).

- This verse was revealed as a result of the delegation of Banū Tamīm who called out to the Prophet ﷺ from behind the rooms of his wives. Their shouting reflected a lack of proper etiquette.
- The wording “your private quarters” is a polite way to describe the houses of the Prophet ﷺ's wives, showing attention to detail and etiquette even in the Quran's expression.
- The verse uses concise language to avoid unnecessary detail, signaling that the behaviour of calling out in this way was improper, without explicitly naming or shaming anyone.



Reflect

Do you message/ring people when you know they are busy expecting them to respond to you immediately?



Act

Think of someone whose space and time you may not respect fully. What can you do differently from today to be more respectful of their space and time?

- Connection to previous verse: calling out to the Prophet ﷺ from behind the rooms involves raising the voice and a breach of proper etiquette, while Allah has commanded reverence and honour for His Messenger.
- The end of the verse mentions they do not have 'aql (intellect). This is because a sign of having intellect is acting with proper etiquette, being considerate of other people's needs and not having an entitled mindset.

Guided by the Qur'an

The Story of Ibn 'Abbās (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu): After the Prophet ﷺ passed away, Ibn 'Abbās (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) would go to as many Companions as possible, especially those who knew the Prophet ﷺ longer and learn from them what the Prophet had taught them. Whenever he heard that someone knew a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ which he did not know, he would go quickly to him and record it down. He would subject whatever he heard to close scrutiny and check it against other narrations. He would go to as many as thirty Companions to verify a single matter.

Ibn 'Abbās (raḍiyy Allāhu 'anhu) described what he once did on hearing that a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ knew a ḥadīth unknown to him:

"I went to him during the time of the afternoon siesta and spread my cloak in front of his door. The wind blew dust on me (as I sat waiting for him)."

If I wished I could have sought his permission to enter and he would certainly have given me permission. But I preferred to wait on him so that he could be completely refreshed. Coming out of his house and seeing me in that condition he said: 'O cousin of the Prophet! What's the matter with you? If you had sent for me I would have come to you.'

'I am the one who should come to you, for knowledge is sought, it does not just come,' I said. I asked him about the ḥadīth and learnt from him."



Reflect

How respectful and considerate are we when we want knowledge, advice or anything else from another human — whether it is our teachers, scholars and anyone who is doing us a favour?

Verse 5

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٤٥)

Had they been patient until you could come out to them, it would have certainly been better for them. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

- Allah knows what is best for us. Sometimes, we may think we know what's best for us, however in this verse, Allah is reminding us of the etiquette which is best for us.
- This ayah serves as evidence that people must honour and revere their leader. They should not treat the leader as equal to themselves. They should wait patiently for their needs to be addressed, and if the leader is at home, they should wait until the leader comes out to them.
- Allah wants us to have the most refined manners and the best character.

وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

- Allah covers our mistakes, pardons us, and overlooks holding us accountable, manifesting His vast mercy toward us.

Act



The next time you're in a difficulty, before going to someone for help, first consider whether you really need someone else's help or can actually figure it out yourself. If you still need help, practise patience and make du'a' instead. After a few hours, reflect on the impact of making du'a' and delaying this need to request for help.

Summary (Verses 1-5)

- Allah is teaching the believers how to behave with the two important forms of etiquette: through speech (verse 2) and action (verse 1).
- Believers are forbidden from putting themselves ahead of God and His Messenger in speech or action and must obey Allah's commands while avoiding His prohibitions.
- Allah hears all words and knows all actions and intentions, ensuring nothing escapes His knowledge.
- Raising one's voice above the Prophet ﷺ or addressing him casually like others may nullify one's righteous deeds.
- Those who lower their voices before the Prophet ﷺ have had their hearts tested and purified by God, and they are promised forgiveness and a great reward.
- People calling to the Prophet ﷺ from behind the rooms of his wives often act out of ignorance; patience and proper etiquette would be better, and God is Forgiving and Merciful.

Part 2 (Verses 6-10)

Verse 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُضْبِحُوا
عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

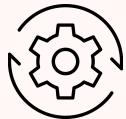
O believers, if a sinner brings you any news, verify (it) so you do not harm people unknowingly, becoming regretful for what you have done.

- In this sūrah, Allah mentions matters in orders of importance. He begins by mentioning the importance of respecting Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. He then mentions the biggest thing which leads to conflict amongst Muslims: listening to the words of a sinner and relying upon it.
- فَاسِقٌ: Fisq refers to turning away from obedience to Allah. It can mean the most serious form of disobedience, which is disbelief (kufr), or lesser sins. The root meaning of fisq is "to go out of" or "to deviate from" something. A Fāsiq is a sinner.
- It is incumbent upon believers **to verify and investigate** news.
- It is essential to avoid spreading suspicion within the Muslim community. In a Muslim community, individuals are normally treated as trustworthy, and the information they bring is considered reliable. A known sinner is treated differently: his information is not accepted until it is verified.
- This verse is evidence that the report of a truthful person is accepted, the report of a liar is rejected, and the report of a sinner is suspended; it necessitates verification and careful scrutiny.



Reflect

When you see/hear any news, how often do you verify it?



Activity

What are the consequences of not verifying something you see or hear?

- a) On an individual:
- b) On families/social circles
- c) On society:

- If external indicators and evidence arise that point to its truthfulness, then the evidence of truth is acted upon, regardless of who conveyed the report. This is the correct approach in dealing with the narration and testimony of a sinner. Many sinners are truthful in their reports, narrations, and testimonies.
- There are three categories of how people deal with bad news/rumours:
 - a. Those who whisper and discuss it among themselves. They backbite and cause the rumour to spread.
 - b. Those who accept such news at face value, internalise it, and then build attitudes and positions upon it without verification or careful examination.
 - c. Those who don't believe bad news or rumours. They ignore it and always think good of their fellow humans. Where needed or appropriate, they hasten to verify the report directly with the person about whom it was raised, and do not allow it to brew in their hearts.



Reflect

Which category do you fall into now?



Activity

When you hear bad news or rumours, you should do the following:

- a) Assume the best about your fellow Muslim
- b) Don't spread the news
- c) Ask for evidence only if it is needed and appropriate
- d) Forgive and overlook faults
- e) Only share the news if verified, with those who need to know to protect themselves from its harm.

- When you hear bad news or rumours, you should do the following:
 - a. Assume the best about your fellow Muslim
 - b. Don't spread the news
 - c. Ask for evidence only if it is needed and appropriate
 - d. Forgive and overlook faults
 - e. Only share the news if verified, with those who need to know to protect themselves from its harm.

Guided by the Qur'an

Abū Bakr (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) was extremely generous and used to spend his money supporting the poor. One of the Companions he supported was his cousin, Mīṣāḥ (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu). In the incident of Ifk, after finding out that Mīṣāḥ had taken part in slandering his daughter, Abū Bakr (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) was very angry with him and decided to stop the financial support he was providing him.

However, the revelation came to the Prophet ﷺ saying: "Do not let the people of virtue and affluence among you swear to suspend donations to their relatives, the needy, and the emigrants in the cause of Allah. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (24:22).

This addressed Abū Bakr directly. He said: "Yes, by Allah, our Lord, we do wish that Allah forgives us." Then he returned to giving Mis̄āḥ what he had previously been giving him.⁴

Refer important matters to Allah, His Messenger, and the leaders and scholars: "And when they hear news of security or fear, they publicise it. Had they referred it to the Messenger or their authorities, those with sound judgement among them would have validated it. Had it not been for Allah's grace and mercy, you would have followed Satan—except for a few." (4:32). Scholars possess the ability to discern the truth and to assess the benefit or harm of publicising the news, even after its authenticity is confirmed, or of withholding it.



Reflect

Imagine a friend tells you that your neighbour's child was caught stealing drugs. What would your immediate reaction be, and what would you do?

How would your reaction now differ based on what you've learnt?



Reflect

Imagine your friend tells you that your colleague was spreading a rumour about you. What would your immediate reaction be, and what would you do?

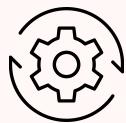
How would your reaction now differ based on what you've learnt?

Speaking Truth

- This verse emphasises the importance of speaking the truth and seeking the truth.
- The Prophet ﷺ said: "Beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A person continues to lie and pursues lying until he is written with Allah as a liar."⁵
- Lying is: *reporting something contrary to what it truly is*. This includes mentioning part of the truth while concealing another part.

⁴ | التخريج : أخرجه موصولاً مسلم (2770) باتفاق يسير

⁵ - إياكم والكذب ، فإن الكذب يهدي إلى الفجور ، والفجور يهدي إلى النار ، وإن الرجل ليكذب فيتحرّى الكذب حق يكتب عند الله كذابا ، وعليكم بالصدق فإن الصدق يهدي إلى البر ، وإن البر يهدي إلى الجنة ، وإن الرجل ليصدق ويتحري الصدق حق يكتب عند الله صديقا | التخريج : أخرجه البخاري (6094) ، ومسلم (2607) باتفاق يسير



Act

Ask Allah to make you from the *ṣādiqīn* (the truthful). Write it down in your *du‘ā'* list.

Verse 7

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعُصْبَانَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ ﴿٧﴾

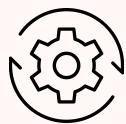
And keep in mind that Allah's Messenger is (still) in your midst. If he obeys you in many matters, you will certainly fall into hardship. But Allah has endeared *īmān* to you, making it appealing in your hearts. And He has made disbelief, rebelliousness, and disobedience detestable to you. Those are the ones rightly guided.

- This verse commands the believers to recognise that they have the Messenger of Allah ﷺ amongst them and thus warning them to not inform him of anything untrue, for he is the Messenger of Allah and is fully aware of what is correct.
- Allah is telling the believers to not impose their opinions on the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
- The latter part of the verse is a motivation to submit to what Allah commands and to accept the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ rather than seeking to impose one's own desires.
- The Messenger of Allah ﷺ represents mercy in everything he chooses for them.
- What is particularly significant here is that they are reminded that it is Allah who has willed that they should have all this bounty. It is He who has rid their hearts of all the evil of disbelief, wrongdoing and sin. It is He who willed that they should follow the right course, bestowing on them His favours and bounty.



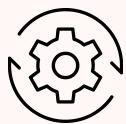
Reflect

How does it make you feel knowing that Allah has chosen you to have *īmān*?



Act

What one regular thing will you do from today to thank Allah for the amazing blessing of īmān He has granted you?



Act

Recite this du‘ā’ regularly:

اللَّهُمَّ حَبِّبْ إِلَيْنَا إِيمَانَ وَرَيْنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِنَا، وَكَرِّهْ إِلَيْنَا الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعُضْيَانَ، وَاجْعَلْنَا
مِنَ الرَّاشِدِينَ

O Allah make our faith beloved to us and beautify it in our hearts and make hateful to us disbelief, wickedness and disobedience. And make us of the rightly guided.⁶

Verse 8

فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٨﴾

(This is) a bounty and a blessing from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

- The qualities mentioned in the previous verse are all a favour and mercy from Allah. It is ONLY because of His *fadl* that you experience īmān; don't ever think for one moment that it comes from you. It is only from Him and He can remove it in an instant.



Act

Thank Allah for guidance and īmān. Ask Him to keep you steadfast until you die.

عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

- These two Names of Allah have immense relevance to the prior verses:

⁶ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad 699

- **News from a sinful person:** When Allah mentions the report of a fāsiq (sinful person), He warns believers not to act hastily or believe it blindly, because it might cause harm or error. They should not rely on lies, as Allah is **fully aware** of all things.
- **Following the Prophet ﷺ:** When Allah says, "And know that in your midst is the Messenger of Allah," it means the Prophet ﷺ does not follow people's personal opinions but follows divine guidance. Allah, being All-Knowing, teaches him, and being All-Wise, commands him in ways that serve perfect wisdom, so the believers should follow him unconditionally.
- **The love of īmān:** "Allah has endeared īmān to you". Allah, in His knowledge and wisdom, made īmān beloved to the believers, and chose it for those He willed with perfect wisdom.
- **Allah's grace:** "(This is) a bounty and a blessing from Allah." Allah, being All-Wise, distributes goodness and guidance according to what is appropriate and beneficial, combining His knowledge with mercy and wisdom.

Allah possesses complete knowledge of everything, including full awareness of who are the righteous and who are the wrongdoers; and who among them are worthy of His bounty and blessings and who are not. He is also Infinitely Wise, placing everything in its proper and fitting place, including granting His favour to those who are truly deserving of it.

Verse 9

وَإِنْ طَائِقَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَرْفِيَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

And if two groups of believers fight each other, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the transgressing group until they (are willing to) submit to the rule of Allah. If they do so, then make peace between both (groups) in all fairness and act justly. Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.

- In these verses, Allah affirms a very important principle. It is the foundation upon which the Islamic community is built: unity and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) for the sake of Allah.
- The bond of īmān and Islam is the strongest and more significant bond because it is a bond between the servant and their Lord. The bond of faith governs and supersedes bonds of blood and lineage, and it is eternal: it does not perish after death.
- In contrast, bonds of kinship, ethnicity, language, and so on, although numerous, do not penetrate deeply into hearts or souls. These bonds are largely incidental and not

chosen; a person is born in a particular land, of a particular race and family, and learns a particular language. Even if these bonds endure in this life, they may lead to enmity and separation in the Hereafter. As Allah says: "Close friends will be enemies to one another on that Day, except the righteous" (43:67).



Reflect

Find someone in your community who is not your relative, friend or from the same background as you. Form a friendship with them, simply because you are both united by *īmān*.

- Link to the previous verse: Allah warned the believers in the previous verse about news coming from a sinful or corrupt person. Here, He indicates what should be done if harm arises from it, as a corrective measure for what might be missed. Al-Biqā'ī explained: When backbiting or spreading false and blameworthy news occurs, it may lead to discord and even fighting. Allah, al-Hakīm (The Wise) and Al-'Alīm (The All-Knowing) does not mention a cause without indicating the remedy, and He does not prohibit something except for those inclined toward it by nature or habit. Thus, He provides guidance on how to prevent false news which may be the cause of fighting: by reconciliation between the conflicting groups.
- Allah did not say "if two factions" (firqatān) fight. Rather He said a "ṭā'ifah" (group), which is smaller than a "firqa" (faction), highlighting that even a small division among believers requires attention.
- Why does Allah use "if one of them transgresses", implying rarity, when in reality, conflicts among Muslim groups are often frequent? "If" indicates that fighting should be rare. Its purpose is to teach that such disputes should not be the norm; the ideal is that believers should not fight among themselves, and reconciliation should be pursued whenever such rare conflicts occur.
- Allah did not command fighting the transgressing group from the outset; rather, reconciliation is commanded first. Only if one group persists in transgression after attempts at reconciliation, it may be fought.
- The verse also indicates the obligation to support the oppressed, since fighting is only justified when necessary and commanded.
- The verse uses the present tense verb "tabghī" (تَبْغِي) – "transgresses") to indicate that fighting is only allowed while the aggression continues. Once the aggressor ceases or repents, fighting becomes prohibited.

إِنْ فَاعْلَمْ فَأَصْلِحُوهُا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

If they do so, then make peace between both (groups) in all fairness and act justly. Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.

- Allah is highlighting the importance of mediating with justice without any oppression or favouritism. Disputes often generate personal feelings, resentment, or partiality among those who mediate. This command reminds the mediators not to let their own preferences, alliances, or grudges influence their judgment. Justice must remain the guiding principle, and reconciliation should not turn into favouritism or oppression.

- أَفْسِطُوا - act justly.
 - "Reconcile between them with justice" (فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ) applies to a specific situation. To generalise and emphasise the application of fairness in all matters, Allah adds: "and act equitably" (وَأَفْسِطُوا). This instruction extends the principle of justice to every issue, ensuring that the mediator pursues the highest degree of fairness and integrity in all actions and circumstances.
 - Since exercising true justice when mediating is often challenging for the human heart, given the grudges and biases one might carry, Allah commands: "wa-aqṣītū". This is to emphasise the importance of implementing the highest form of justice without oppression or partiality, not only in reconciliation but in all dealings.
- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ - Surely Allah loves those who uphold justice.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Indeed, the just (al-muqṣītīn) will be on elevated pulpits of light with Allah, on the right side of the Most Merciful, those who act with justice in their judgements, toward their families, and over those under their authority."⁷



Reflect

Why do you think 'those who are just' will have such a high status?



Reflect

How just are you in situations of conflict? Do you sway towards someone's point of view just because they are your friend/relative?

- If a believer wrongs you, you are still required to reconcile with them and be loyal towards them because injustice does not break the bond of īmān.



Act

In your journal, write down five qualities that Allah says He loves in the Qur'an. Make du'a to Allah to grant you those five qualities.

⁷ التخرج: أخرجه مسلم (1827)، والنسائي (5379) واللفظ له

Verse 10

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوِيهِنَّمُّ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرَحَّمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy.

- Believers are described as brothers, even in the midst of conflict and rebellion; and there is a duty to reconcile them. Conversely, neglecting the rights of believers is a major barrier to receiving mercy.
- Fulfilling the rights of fellow believers and having God-consciousness (taqwā) leads to Allah's mercy.
- This verse indicates that reconciliation is among the greatest acts of obedience and one of the most serious commitments in the dīn.
- The Prophet ﷺ said: "Do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not turn your backs on one another, and be, as servants of Allah, brothers. It is not permissible for a Muslim to abandon his brother for more than three days."⁸
- 'Abdullah b. 'Umar reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not wrong him, nor surrender him. Whoever fulfills the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfill his needs. Whoever relieves a Muslim from distress, Allah will relieve him from distress on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever covers the faults of a Muslim, Allah will cover his faults on the Day of Resurrection."⁹
- A Muslim's duty toward his brother is to remove all animosity and replace it with affection and love, because true brotherhood cannot coexist with hatred, enmity, or malice.
- The core message of this is that love, peace, cooperation and unity are the essential characteristics of a Muslim community. Conflict and fighting are exceptions that must be dealt with as soon as they occur in order to bring about reconciliation and peace.

Act



If two of your fellow believers have fallen out, make an active effort to reconcile between them. Don't think it's not your responsibility. It is the duty of every believer to help create a harmonious society without animosity.

⁸ التخريج : أخرجه البخاري (6065)، ومسلم (2559)

⁹ | التخريج : أخرجه البخاري (2442)، ومسلم (2580) باتفاق يسير

Summary (Verses 6-10)

- Allah commands His believing servants to verify any news that comes from a fāsiq (a sinful person), so that they do not harm others unknowingly or make mistakes by believing it without careful checking, which they might later regret.
- He also reminds the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah is among them. Even if he were to follow their opinions in many matters, they would fall into hardship and difficulty. But Allah has made faith beloved to their hearts, and made disbelief, sin, and wrongdoing hateful to them. They should be grateful to Allah for this, and not try to precede Allah or His Messenger in decision-making.
- Allah commands His believing servants to reconcile between two factions of believers who have fought. If one of the factions refuses reconciliation while the other agrees, then the faction that refuses and transgresses should be fought until it returns to Allah's law. If it returns, reconciliation should be made justly, and judgment should be executed with truth and fairness, for Allah loves those who act with justice.
- Believers are brothers in īmān, so reconciliation must be carried out between both believing factions if they engage in conflict, and God-consciousness should be observed, that they may receive His mercy.

Part 3 (Verses 11-13)

Verse 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابِزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

O believers! Do not let some (men) ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let (some) women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having īmān! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the wrongdoers.

- Islam establishes human society in the light of Qur'ānic guidance, a guidance that upholds a high standard of manners. Every individual in this society has personal integrity that must not be compromised, as it forms part of the integrity of the whole community. To slander anyone is to slander oneself, because the whole community is a single entity and its integrity is one.
- The bad attributes mentioned in the next few verses all destroy the bond between believers. This is why Allah warns us so strongly against them.
- The fact that these verses address the believers indicate that the commands are part of the obligations of faith. To ignore these commands or violate them are signs of deficiency in faith.
- Don't ridicule (لَا يَسْخَرْ):
 - The person being ridiculed may actually be better in the sight of Allah than the one mocking. People can only see outward appearances and have no knowledge of hidden realities. What truly matters to Allah is the sincerity of the heart, piety, and the purity of intentions. Therefore, no one should mock someone who appears poor, has a physical disability, or has any apparent flaw, because that person may be more sincere, righteous, or pious in the sight of Allah. Mockery in such cases leads one to injustice as one belittles someone whom Allah honours, and underestimates someone whom Allah has elevated.



Reflect

What causes people to ridicule others? What impact does ridiculing others have on the perpetrator, the victim and society?

- Allah uses the plural words in 'qawm' and 'nisā' to show that:
 - Mockery doesn't happen alone and often involves others laughing, encouraging, enjoying it or not stopping it, and they all share in the sin.
 - Even if it starts with one person, it quickly turns into group behaviour, especially in gatherings/online.

Guided by the Qur'an

One time, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, 'A'ishah (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) said to the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah, Ṣafiyah is a woman who is..." and she used her hand to **indicate** that Ṣafiyah is short, belittling her. Upon seeing this, the Prophet ﷺ said: "You have said a statement which, if it were mixed in with the water of the sea, it would pollute it" (Tirmidhī).



Reflect

What other actions (other than speech) could be regarded as ridicule?



Act

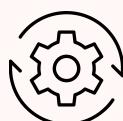
If you are in the presence of someone ridiculing someone else, remind them gently of the impact of their actions.

- Do not defame/criticise: wise people find faults in themselves instead of finding it in other people. The phrase 'anfusakum - yourselves' has been used to emphasise that if you criticise another believer, it is as though you are criticising yourself as all believers are like one body and structure.
- Ridiculing others comes from thinking you are better because of a quality Allah has given you i.e. kibr (pride). This verse goes to the root of the issue and reminds you that the person you are ridiculing may actually be better than you, in the sight of Allah.
- Do not call someone by a name they dislike.
- Do not look down on other people. This can be subtle too: by the way you greet them, the tone you use, the expectations you have of them or what you don't do that you would normally do (e.g. smile)
- How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith: belief and action are closely interconnected. Faith requires action!

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the wrongdoers.

- A believer will slip. However, they are required to:
 - Turn to Allah in sincere repentance.
 - Make amends for any rights of their fellow Muslim that were wronged, by seeking forgiveness (if it's not likely to cause more harm), praising them, and compensating for past slander or belittlement.
- الظالِمُونَ: You are wronging yourself on two fronts:
 - Wronging people by transgressing against them
 - Wronging yourself by accepting punishment in the Hereafter despite being able to give up these actions



Act

Repent from your sins on a daily basis so that you don't meet Allah in a state of being from amongst the wrongdoers.

Verse 12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِنَ الظُّنُنِ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظُّنُنِ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا
يَغْتَبْ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا أَيُّحُبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيِّتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

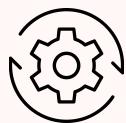
O believers! Avoid many suspicions: indeed, some suspicions are sinful. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of their dead brother? You would despise that! And fear Allah. Surely Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.

- Do not have false suspicions:
 - The root of all evil actions stem from the heart. Having false suspicions is the catalyst to the following two prohibitions in the verse: spying and backbiting.
 - The command in this verse is to avoid much suspicion, thus it is understood that suspicions are not few, rather they occur frequently.



Reflect

What can false suspicions lead to? Have you ever made a false assumption/suspicion about someone, and what was its consequence?



Act

The next time you have a false suspicion about someone, make du‘ā’ for them, instead of acting on the suspicion or letting it linger in your heart. A few days later, reflect on how you feel.



Act

The next time you have any bad thoughts, replace it with a good thought about Allah. Transform your vices into good actions.

- Do not spy:
 - Ibn ‘Abbās (raḍiyy Allāhu ‘anhu) said it means following the faults or private matters of people, and al-Awzā‘ī said it includes listening to people’s private conversations against their will.
 - The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ascended the pulpit and called out in a loud voice: “O group of people who have embraced Islam with their tongues but whose faith has not yet reached their hearts: do not harm the Muslims, do not insult them, and do not follow their faults. For whoever follows the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will follow his faults, and whoever Allah follows, He will expose, even in the depths of his travel bag.” ¹⁰
 - Al-Ghazālī: The meaning of spying (*tajassus*) is that one does not leave God’s servants under God’s protection; rather, one seeks to uncover and violate their concealment, so that what would have been safer for the heart to keep hidden, becomes exposed.
 - A scholar said: “I reflected on the verse in Sūrah al-Hujurāt, and it appeared to me that the placement of the prohibition on spying (*tajassus*) between the prohibition of evil suspicion (*su’ al-żann*) and the prohibition of backbiting (*ghībah*) carries an important meaning. This is because spying combines multiple vices, the most important of which are evil suspicion, following faults, and backbiting. Spying first arises from evil suspicion; then, after suspicion emerges, one begins spying and uncovering faults; after that, the spy reports what he has seen or heard (i.e. *ghībah*).”

¹⁰ التخريج : أخرجه الترمذى (2032) واللفظ له، وابن حبان (5763)، وأبو الشيخ في ((التوبيخ والتنبيه)) (93).

Guided by the Qur'an

A man was brought to Ibn Mas'ūd (rađiy Allāhu 'anhu) and it was said, "This man was found with wine dripping from his beard!" Ibn Mas'ūd said, "Verily, we have been prohibited from spying, but if he shows it to us publicly, we will hold him accountable."¹¹

- Do not backbite:
 - As a believer, you are obliged to protect the honour of your fellow believer. Do not speak about them in their absence in a way they would dislike.
 - The Prophet ﷺ said: "Do you know what backbiting is?" They said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: "Mentioning your brother in a way he dislikes." Someone asked: "What if what I say about my brother is true?" He said: "If it is true, then you have backbitten him; if it is not true, then you have slandered him."¹²
 - Brotherhood requires mutual support and defense, but the backbiter does the opposite of what brotherhood demands by engaging in blame, fault-finding, and slander.
 - Allah provides us with powerful imagery of a repulsive act: eating the flesh of your dead brother. Since a person's honour is more noble than their body, if it is unacceptable for a rational person to eat someone else's flesh, then it is even more unacceptable to violate their honour.
 - The word "dead" (maytan) points to the removal of the misconception that speaking about someone badly to his face is forbidden because it causes pain, whereas backbiting does not cause pain since the person is unaware of it. Allah clarifies this by saying that eating the flesh of one's brother while he is dead also does not cause him pain, yet it remains extremely repugnant. This is because if he were aware of it, it would cause him pain, just as the deceased person would be harmed if he could feel his flesh being eaten.
 - 'Umar (rađiy Allāhu 'anhu) said: - إِيَّاكُمْ وَذِكْرُ النَّاسِ إِنَّهُ دَاءٌ، وَعَلَيْكُمْ بَذِكْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ شَفَاءٌ Beware of talking about people, for it is a disease. And hold fast to the remembrance of Allah, for it is a cure.



Reflect

Do you enjoy looking into people's private business and spying on them?
Why do you think that is?

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابُ رَحِيمٌ

- Taqwā can be achieved after committing a sin, through repentance. Likewise, taqwā can also be a preemptive state, so Allah's mercy encompasses all who have taqwā, as He is Most Merciful.

¹¹ سنن أبي داود كتاب الأدب باب في النهي عن التجسس

¹² | التخريج: أخرجه أبو داود (4874) واللفظ له، وأخرجه مسلم (2589) باتفاق يسir

- Allah is telling us to repent again as He knows we will fall short. The attributes of Allah mentioned here highlight:
 - The abundance of those who repent and are forgiven by Allah
 - No sin committed by a sinner is beyond forgiveness when repented from
 - Allah is fully capable of accepting repentance and completely wiping a person's slate clean, out of His vast generosity and mercy, restoring them to the state of someone who never committed the sin.

The structure of the verse is amazing: suspicion leads to spying which leads to backbiting, because if a person suspects something about his brother, he may spy, and if he spies, he then backbites.

People have their freedoms, sanctities, and dignity, which must never be violated in any form, nor touched under any circumstances. In a lofty and noble Islamic society, people feel safe about themselves, their secrets, their private matters and within their homes and society; and no justification can be accepted for violating the sanctity of individuals, secrets, private matters or homes.

Verse 13

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًاٰ وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُواٰ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاءِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَيْرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.

- Link to the previous verse: True brotherhood and unity are built on faith and piety, not on social rank or family lineage.
- Male and female: everyone is equal in their origin. We were all created from a male and a female, and this should be the strongest deterrent against boasting about lineage or treating others as though they are beneath you.
- The purpose of different tribes and nations is for us to understand each other and build relationships with each other; it is not to air superiority over others or ridicule them.
- Islam has fought ignorant fanaticism in all its forms and shapes. This is to establish its world system under Allah's banner alone. In Islam, banners of nationality and race have neither place nor value.
- The Prophet ﷺ said: "Indeed, Allah has removed from you the pride of the pre-Islamic ignorance and boasting about one's ancestors. A believer is pious, and a sinner is wretched. You are all the children of Ādam, and Ādam was created from clay."¹³

¹³ | التخريج : أخرجه أبو داود (5116) واللطف له، والترمذى (3956) مختصرًا باختلاف يسير، وأحمد (8736) باختلاف يسير

- Allah is the one who created you and made you; this proves there is no justification for boasting as this was not through your own effort or power so how can you take pride in something which you had no part in?

Guided by the Qur'an

'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) had small shins. Once, he was harvesting toothsticks from an Arak tree. The wind blew and made him fall over, so people laughed at him. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "What are you laughing at?" They said, "O Prophet of Allah, he has tiny shins!" The Prophet said, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, they will both be heavier on the Scale than the mountain of Uhud." ¹⁴

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاءُكُمْ

- True excellence and honour are determined by righteousness and taqwā, not by worldly status, tribe, or family.
- This is also a reminder to purify our intentions, knowing that Allah knows what is in our hearts and will hold us accountable for it.



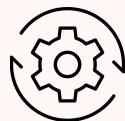
Reflect

How do you measure people's worth?



Reflect

Which ethnic background are you from? Do you believe some ethnicities are better than others? What is that hierarchy in your mind? Be honest. And where has this come from? Is it from suspicion, assumptions, pride or something else? What active steps are you going to take to wipe them?



Activity

1. Why is pride so harmful?
2. What causes pride?
3. What are the symptoms of pride?
4. What are the cures for pride?

14 المحدث شعيب الأرناؤوط خلاصة حكم المحدث صحيح لغيره في تخريج المسند 7/99



Reflect

Imagine you are waiting in the playground at school to pick up your child. Are you more likely to help or say salam/talk or be friendly to a parent who is the same ethnicity to you or dresses like you, than someone from a totally different ethnicity?

Summary (Verses 11-13)

- Allah forbids His believing servants from mocking or ridiculing other believers.
- He also forbids us from insulting or calling each other by offensive names.
- He commands His servants to avoid excessive suspicion, spying on one another and backbiting. Allah concludes by commanding God-consciousness, reminding that He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.
- Allah addresses all of humanity, explaining that He created them and made them into nations and tribes so that they may know one another. He declares that the most honoured among them in His sight is the most God-conscious, for He is All-Knowing and All-Aware.

Part 4 (Verses 14-18)

Verse 14

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَذْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلْتَكُمْ مِنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ

رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

(Some of) the nomadic Arabs say, "We believe." Say, (O Prophet,) "You have not believed. But say, 'We have submitted,' for *īmān* has not yet entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything from (the reward of) your deeds. Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

- These verses were revealed in relation to the Bedouins of the Asad tribe who, as soon as they accepted Islam, boasted saying, "**We believe.**" They even counted this as a favour they performed for the Prophet ﷺ. They said to him: "Messenger of God! We have become Muslims. Other Arabs have fought you, but we have not." God wanted to show them the truth of what was in their hearts when they said this, stating that they only embraced *islām*, while the reality of *īmān* had not touched their hearts.
- Once again, Allah highlights the central role of our hearts. *Imān* resides in our hearts. Our physical actions do not mean anything if they are not accompanied by the actions of the heart.
- A *Mu'min* holds a higher status than a Muslim.
 - Islam: Submitting to Allah and disassociating from shirk.
 - *Imān*: Declaration by the tongue, the belief in the heart, and the action by the limbs; it increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience.
- Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful:
 - Allah is quick to grant forgiveness and bestow His mercy. He accepts from His servant the first step and rewards him for submission and obedience while waiting until faith settles in his heart
 - Allah forgives our sins, conceals them and doesn't hold us accountable for them. From His mercy, He accepts our repentance and honours us with His blessings.



Reflect

When you perform other acts of worship, are you aware of the actions of the heart? Do you focus only on the outward ritual?



Act

Make a firm intention this year to study or read a book on the actions and diseases of the heart.

Verse 15

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ
وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

The (true) believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger—never doubting—and strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah. They are the ones true in faith.

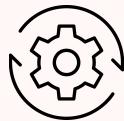
- This verse mentions 3 signs of true faith:
 - Belief without doubt
 - Sacrificing your wealth to seek Allah's pleasure alone
 - Sacrificing your life to seek Allah's pleasure alone
- Al-Hasan said: "Imān is not by wishful thinking or outward appearance, but what settles firmly in the heart and is confirmed by deeds."
- When the heart tastes the sweetness of faith, feels secure in it, and remains firm upon it, it urges the believer to manifest this truth through their actions, influencing their surroundings and the realities of life.

1. Belief without doubt



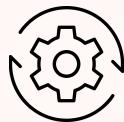
Reflect

Do you have doubts in your faith? What causes these doubts?



Act

Building *yaqīn* (certainty in faith) is the way to dispel doubts. What one thing will you do from today to build your *yaqīn* and *īmān*? (You may use verses 2-4 of Sūrah al-Anfāl to help you).¹⁵



Act

What one thing will you do today to encourage young people to have *yaqīn* in Allah and His Messenger?

- Doubts in faith usually emerge when you are going through a trial. However, trials are a key aspect of our faith. Allah reminds us of something powerful in Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt: “Do people think once they say, “We believe,” that they will be left without being put to the test?” (29:2).



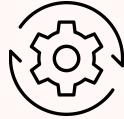
Reflect

What are the effects of having strong faith and *yaqīn*?

- Peace of heart, guidance and success in the world and Hereafter, detachment from the world, patience during trials, not being influenced by fear or intimidation, contentment with Allah’s decree, increased *tawakkul*, courage in facing fears/enemies, steadfastness in faith.

2. Sacrificing your wealth

- The verse doesn’t say ‘spending’ in the path of Allah. It has specifically used the word striving or sacrificing wealth. This is because spending or donating is easy for many, however true sacrifice requires struggle and breaking of desires.



Act

Give when it is uncomfortable. Give when you have close to nothing.

¹⁵ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيهِنَّ عَيْنَيْهِمْ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ۚ الَّذِينَ يُقْيِمُونَ الْصَّلَاةَ وَمَمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

3. Sacrificing your lives in the path of Allah

- This is the ultimate test of faith. Our lives are what is most dearest to us. The person who sacrifices their life for the sake of Allah displays the highest level of īmān in Allah.
- Mentioning jihād and charity with wealth and self is not meant to be exhaustive. Allah has highlighted the most difficult acts for the soul — fighting in battle where the soul is at risk and spending wealth which one naturally loves — to emphasise that all other rituals (prayer, fasting, hajj, zakāh, and all divine laws) are even easier and more within reach.
- This verse also emphasises that only one whose īmān has deeply penetrated the heart will reach this level of sacrifice of self and wealth solely for the pleasure of Allah, without seeking worldly benefit.

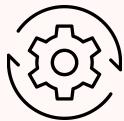
Speak truthfully, and let your words and actions correspond to the reality of your heart.

Verse 16

قُلْ أَتُعْلَمُونَ اللَّهُ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾

Say, 'Do you presume to teach Allah about your religion, when Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth? And Allah has knowledge of all things.'

- The human being may profess to have knowledge, yet he neither knows nor understands himself or his feelings.
- Allah is rebuking the bedouins in this verse as they were making an effort to convince the Prophet of the sincerity of their faith, despite Allah knowing the contrary, which amounts to an attempt to convince Allah Himself: a clear sign of their hypocrisy and lack of true faith.
- Our īmān should be purely for Allah. The bedouins displayed their faith to Muslims and not sincerely to Allah, so it is not accepted from them.



Act

Take a moment to sincerely renew your faith to Allah.

- The verse ends with a reminder and reinforcement that nothing is hidden from Him. They cannot deceive Allah, as He knows all that is unseen in the heavens and earth.

Verse 17

يَمُنُّونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَذَا كُمْ لِلْدِيْمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

They regard their acceptance of Islam as a favour to you. Tell (them, O Prophet), “Do not regard your Islam as a favour to me. Rather, it is Allah Who has done you a favour by guiding you to the faith, if (indeed) you are faithful.

- Having explained the true nature of faith, the sūrah then addresses the Prophet ﷺ, referring to those Bedouins and how they asserted that they had done the Prophet ﷺ a favour by accepting Islam. This very action is clear evidence that the nature of faith had not yet penetrated their hearts.



Reflect

Write down all the blessings you have been granted because of faith, both on a societal and individual level.



Reflect

Do you ever say or act like you are doing a favour to Allah or to Islamic institutions or to the ummah when you donate, or give your time or attend a course/class? Rather, you should be eternally grateful to Allah and to the poor or to the ones running the institutions that they gave you the opportunity to serve/give.



Act

If Allah grants you the blessing to do good, thank Him and never attribute it to yourself, as it is truly a blessing from Him alone, and He can withdraw it at any moment.

- Imān is the supreme favour Allah grants to any of His servants on earth. It gives:
 - A broader vision of the universe, how it relates to us, and our role in it;
 - An accurate criterion with which to know the essence of values, people and events;
 - A warm, interactive relationship with God who has created us and the universe;
 - A feeling that we are honoured and that we are fulfilling an important role to please God and to bring goodness to this universe and to all who live in it;
 - He can do many things, initiate great events, influence and be influenced by all around him, and can derive strength from the Supreme Power that created him as well as all forces and powers in the universe. That is the Power that never weakens, shrinks or disappears.
 - They have true answers to their questions: Where have they come from, and why? Where are they going, and what will they find there? They know that they are in this life for a particular purpose, and that whatever happens to them serves to bring about that purpose. They know that this life is the testing ground for the life to come; that they will be accountable for every action they do, major or minor, and that they have not been created in vain, will not be abandoned or left to travel alone. When we have such knowledge, all worries, doubts and feelings of insecurity disappear.

"Imān is a great motivating force. When it is settled in a person's heart, it begins to work, fulfil itself and bring about perfect harmony between its inner image and its appearance. It takes control over all human motivations and harnesses them along the way. This is the secret of the strength of faith in the human soul and the power one gains through faith. It is the secret underlying the miracles faith has achieved in this world, and continues to achieve every day: miracles that change the whole appearance of life from one day to another. It is faith that motivates both the individual and the community to sacrifice their lives on earth in order to gain success in the greater and everlasting life to come. Furthermore, it is faith that gives an ordinary individual, with little or no support, the means to stand up to oppressive forces and to both temptation and persecution. All these forces are easily vanquished when they face the motivating power of faith in the heart of a single believer. It is not the individual that achieves success over all these forces; it is the great power that derives from the spirit of faith which is akin to a powerfully flowing and inexhaustible spring." (In the Shade of the Qur'an)

Verse 18

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

Surely Allah knows the unseen of the heavens and earth. And Allah is All-Seeing of what you do."

- "Inna" (إِنْ) is to emphasise the certainty of the news, because they were in a state of denying that Allah knows the unseen. They lied to the Prophet ﷺ, even though they knew he was sent by Allah, so their lying to him was like lying to Allah Himself.
- The sūrah concludes with: "Indeed, Allah knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is All-Seeing of what you do", linking it with the beginning of the sūrah: "Do not put yourselves before Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah." Nothing is hidden from Him, neither secrets in private nor deeds in public, so beware of everything you do.
- The secret to developing taqwā is in this verse. Once you internalise that Allah is aware of absolutely everything, you will be aware of your actions, statements and thoughts.

Summary (Verses 14-18)

- The Bedouins came to the Prophet ﷺ claiming 'We believe'. Allah commanded the Prophet ﷺ to tell them that they have not yet truly believed but have 'submitted': full and complete īmān had not entered their hearts.
- Allah then guides them to what perfects their faith and clarifies the qualities of the true believers: those who believe in Allah and His Messenger without doubts, and spend their wealth and lives for the sake of Allah.
- Allah is Aware of everything.
- Allah reminds us that we are not doing Him or the faith any favours by accepting and believing; instead, our faith is a favour He has granted us.
- Once again, Allah reminds us that He is All-Seeing and All-Aware of everything we do.

Overall Surah Reflection

1. What did you learn about Allah from this sūrah?
2. What are the key messages from this sūrah?
3. Which verse stood out to you the most in this sūrah?
4. How will this sūrah transform the way you live your life? What 3 things will you do differently from today?