

Gratitude in the Modern World

HOW SHUKUR IS THE
ANTIDOTE TO STRESS



CHAPTER MARKERS:

- 1** Reasons to be Grateful
- 2** The Struggle to be Grateful
- 3** Signs of Ungratefulness
- 4** Practising Gratitude
 (in today's modern world)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Peace be upon you, my dearest Champs.

As a believer, the concept of "Shukur" (Gratitude) is something that has been ingrained in us. And for many of us city dwellers, "Stress", on the other hand, is almost a by-product of modernity. If we were to ask ourselves which reign supreme in our lives and which of the two is your "companion", would your answer be Shukur or Stress?

Our intentions with this publication is to dive deeper into the bountiful blessing that is Gratitude and learn how do we use this powerful virtue as an antidote to Stress. What does the Quran and Hadith say? How did our Prophets alayhu as-salām anchored themselves with Gratitude through their tribulations? How can we practice Shukur with true sincerity in this day and age? All of this and more will be covered, In Sha Allah!

Champs, I pray with all my heart that you will be inspired to flex more of your Gratitude muscle and wipe away the stress dust in your life after reading this booklet. May we be chosen to be from the People of Alhamdulillah, Amin!

hida



Gratitude

/ˈgratɪtjuːd/

(n.) A sense of fulfilment that comes not from wanting more but from knowing that God has already blessed us with what we need. A thankful appreciation for what an individual receives, whether tangible or intangible.

Stress

/strɛs/

(n.) Can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. It is your body's response to anything that requires attention or action. Experiencing a great deal of stress can even contribute to feelings of anxiety.



Reasons to be Grateful

Firstly,

HAVING GRATITUDE IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP.

There are many Ayahs in the Quran that commands us to be grateful to Allah SWT and the favours that He has blessed us with.

Let us start by pondering some of these verses, taking special note of the various blessings that Allah SWT has specifically highlighted in relation to having Shukur.

#1

So eat from the good, lawful things which Allah has provided for you, and be **grateful** for Allah's favours, if you 'truly' worship Him 'alone'.

(Surah an-Nahl 16:114)

*Were we grateful for
the last meal we ate?*



#2

It is out of His mercy that He
has made for you the **day and
night** so that you may rest 'in
the latter' and seek His bounty
'in the former', and perhaps
you will be **grateful**.

(Surah al-Qasas 28:73)

*Have we thanked Allah SWT
for all the beautiful sunsets we
captured on our phones?*



#3

If He wills, He can calm the **wind**, leaving the ships motionless on the water. Surely in this are signs for whoever is steadfast, **grateful**.

(Surah ash-Shuraa 42:33)

*Have we contemplated on how
Allah SWT has made our
movement and travel, easy?*



#4

And Allah has extracted you
from the wombs of your mothers
not knowing a thing, and He
made for you **hearing** and **vision**
and **hearts** [i.e., intellect] that
perhaps you would be **grateful**.

(Surah an-Nahl 16:78)

Were we
grateful
for the last
idea /
thought /
reflection
He allowed
us to have?



#5

O believers! When you rise up for prayer, **wash** your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, and wash your feet to the ankles... It is not Allah's Will to burden you, but to purify you and complete His favour upon you, so perhaps you will be **grateful**.

(Surah al-Ma'idah 5:6)

Were we thankful for the last Wudhu or shower Allah SWT allowed us to take in our comfortable bathrooms?



OUT OF THE FIVE, WHICH ONE HAVE YOU THANKED ALLAH FOR, RECENTLY?

Imagine your life without food, without sunrises nor sunsets, without the ease of movement, without hearing, vision nor intellect, without water nor the ability to take wudhu. How different would your lives be? Wouldn't you say it will truly be stressful then?

And yet, even if you had not thanked Allah SWT for any of these blessings, in His Mercy and His Generosity, He will never tire to sustain, give and provide all of His creations, abundantly.



Secondly,

THE PEOPLE OF ALLAH WERE ALL GRATEFUL SERVANTS.

One of the common traits of the past Prophets (*alayhu as-salām*) and the righteous (*raḍiyata'llāhu 'anhuma*) was that they all had immense gratitude in their hearts.

Even though they were some of the most tried people, had heavy responsibilities and went through great hardships, they were also the most grateful. We will now look at some of these blessed role models, ponder on their life journeys and see how with Gratitude at their core, they emerge the most triumphant & victorious!

Meet the Grateful Ones

PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

The best example we can emulate is our beloved Rasulullah ﷺ, whose famous words were the inspiration for this very publication you are reading:

*The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, would pray until his feet were swollen. It was said to him, "Why do you do this when Allah has forgiven your past and future sins?" The Prophet said, "**Shall I not be a grateful servant?**" (Muslim)*

*Ponder upon this: Rasulullah ﷺ had to bury his own children, was driven out of his own city, was called a madman, lost his loved ones, **and** was given the momentous task of teaching the Message of Islam to a community that was ignorant and arrogant - that's A LOT - but he ﷺ always walked the path of Alhamdulillah.*

Rasulullah ﷺ taught us that

GRATITUDE
IS THE ONLY
ATTITUDE
TO HAVE.



[Download this wallpaper here!](#)



PROPHET IBRAHIM A.S.

Prophet Ibrahim AS is known as "*Khalilullah*" (a close friend of Allah), a name that Allah SWT Himself gave to him in the Quran. If you are wondering what are the traits of being an intimate friend of Allah SWT, the Quran tells us in the following Ayah:

*Indeed, Abraham was a model of excellence: devoted to Allah, 'perfectly' upright—not a polytheist— 'utterly' **grateful for Allah's favours**. 'So' He chose him and guided him to the Straight Path. (An-Nahl 16:120-121)*

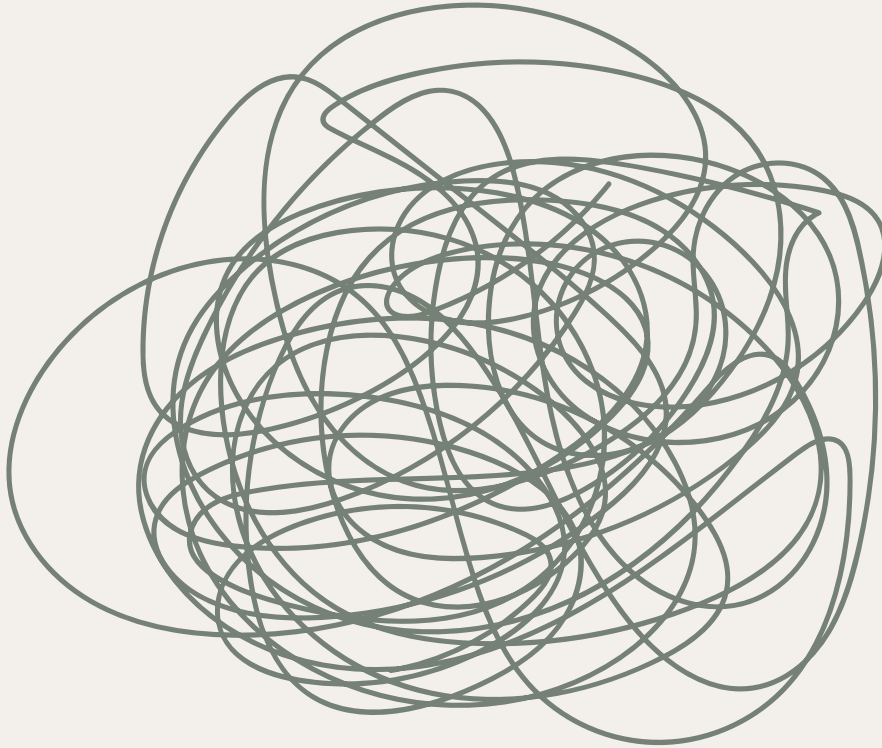
But if you think that being a friend of Allah SWT means "no problems" in life, let's take a quick look at Prophet Ibrahim's tumultuous life.

PROPHET IBRAHIM (AS)

LIFE TRAJECTORY

- *Was raised by a father who made and sold idols*
- *But Allah gave him understanding of the Deen*
- *In his youth, he began calling his people to Tauhid*
- *He destroyed their idols, but...*
- *Was thrown in the fire (!!) by his own people instead.*
- *Married to Sarah RA, they waited for a child,*
- *for a very, very, very, very, very long time.*
- *Angels then told them the good news of Ishak AS!*
- *Meanwhile, Hajar RA had Prophet Ismail AS.*
- *But he was asked to leave them in a barren land!*
- *When re-united, he was then told to sacrifice his son!*
- *What an ultimate test of Detachment!*
- *But they succeeded and built the Kaabah together!*

*Basically,
even if our life might look like this:*



*With Gratitude and trust in His Plans,
it will always end up like this:*





Listen to this fantastic re-cap of Prophet Ibrahim AS's legacy [here](#) on our TKV!



PROPHET SULAIMAN A.S.

Prophet Sulaiman AS is known for his mighty kingdom, wealth, and his gift of being able to communicate with Jinns and animals. You might ask, *"How is his life, difficult?"* However, we need to understand that gratitude is **not** guaranteed for everyone who has a charmed life. How often do we see that the ones who have it all also have the loudest complaints?

Through Prophet Sulaiman AS, Allah SWT teaches us that it is important to attribute everything we have back to Allah SWT. We see this through the Du'a Prophet Sulaiman AS made that was immortalised in the Quran:

"My Lord! Inspire me to 'always' be thankful for Your favours which You have blessed me and my parents with, and to do good deeds that please you. Admit me, by Your mercy, into 'the company of' Your righteous servants." (An-Naml 27:19)

to contemplate:

Why did Prophet Sulaiman AS
included the blessings
that **his parents** received
as well, in his Du'a?

Are **you** grateful for the
blessings **your parents** received?

PROPHET NUH A.S.



Allah SWT tells us in the Quran that Prophet Nuh AS was a grateful servant: *'O' descendants of those We carried with Noah 'in the Ark'! **He was indeed a grateful servant.***" (Al-Isra 17:3)

Imagine trying to spread the message of Islam **for 950 years**, but despite his efforts, his words only touched the hearts of the weak and the poor, but not the rich who continued to wage war on him for generations. This was when the call to build the ark was given to him AS.

But he was **tested with mocking words** from the disbelievers and when it was time to board the ark, **his wife and one of his sons refused to board**. Imagine then seeing this horrifying scene unfold in front of your very eyes as a father: "the waves came between them, and his son was among the drowned." (Hud 11:43)

But here's an interesting thing
about Allah SWT's compliment of
Prophet Nuh AS in the Quran:

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ
إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

(Al-Isra 17:3)

- The general word for 'Grateful' in Arabic is 'Shaakiran'; someone who shows gratitude, but Allah SWT refers to Prophet Nuh AS as 'Shakoor' instead. Why?
- The word 'Shakoor', as opposed to 'Shaakir', has two implications: 1) It makes him extremely, excessively grateful (known as *Mubaalaghah* in linguistics) and 2) it makes it a constant, i.e., it happens at every occasion.
- Meaning to say Prophet Nuh AS is **constantly grateful**, and each time, he AS demonstrates **the most extreme form of gratitude**.

Ponder for a second the life journey of Prophet Nuh AS. This is the Prophet who went through resistance, insults, humiliation, betrayal from his own family (talk about stress!), and yet, Allah SWT calls him 'Shakoor' - the one who is constantly and immensely grateful, Ma Sha Allah!

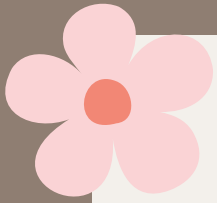
TO BE PEOPLE
OF ALLAH,
WE HAVE TO BE
PEOPLE OF
ALHAMDULILLAH.

Lastly,

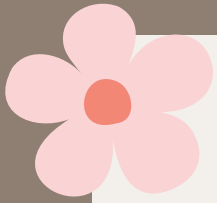
SHUKR ANCHORS US IN OUR FAST- PACED LIVES.

In today's fast-paced world, where stress and negativity often take centre stage, the concept of gratitude stands out as a beacon of **hope**. And those who nurture that sense of gratitude within themselves seek not only Allah's Pleasure but also their happiness, relieving themselves of the many pressures and anxieties that one can face in their daily lives.





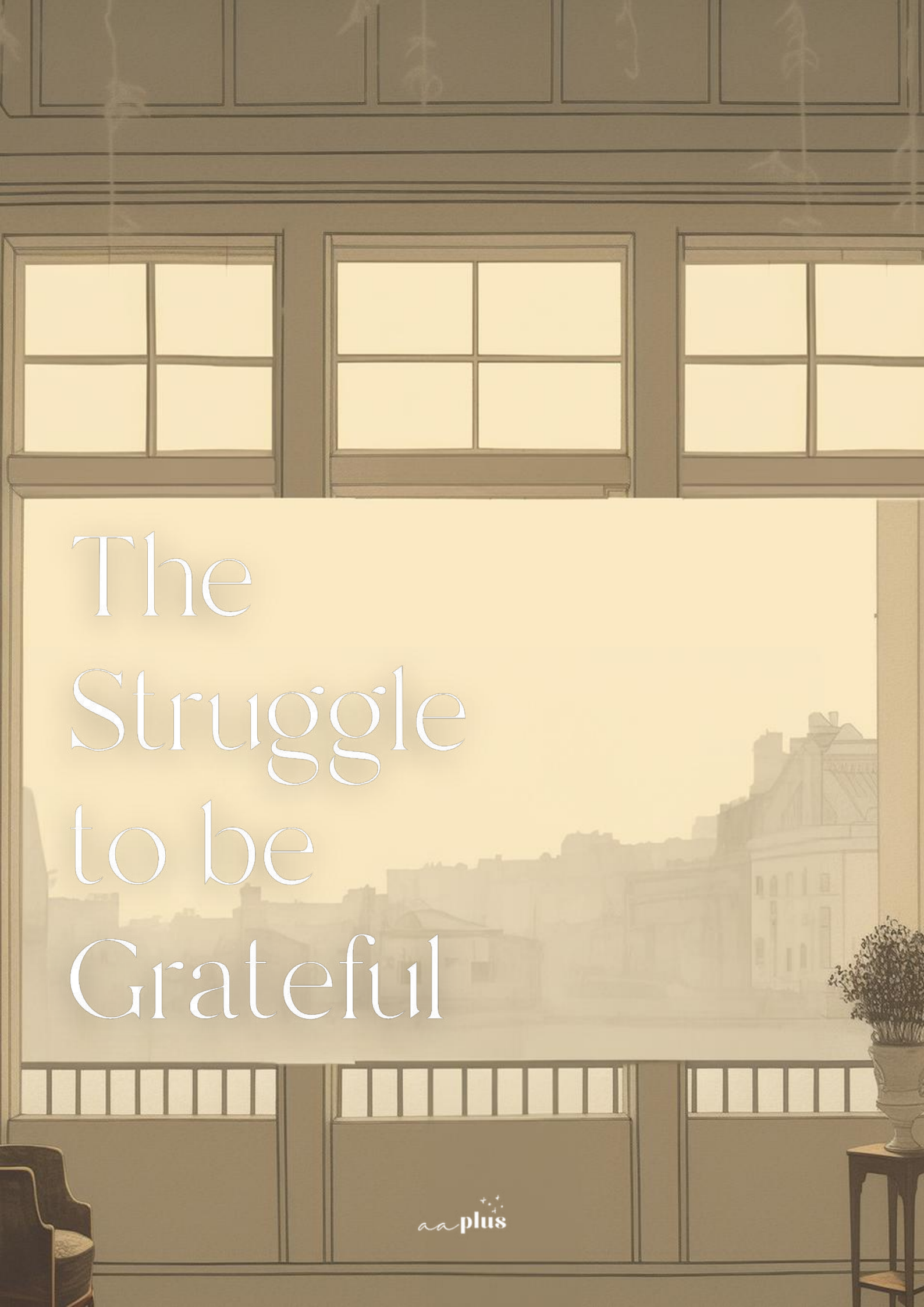
- Studies have shown that gratitude **reduces a multitude of toxic emotions**, ranging from envy and resentment to frustration and regret.
- Research published in the last decade has shown that **grateful people have fewer common health complaints**, such as headaches, digestion issues, respiratory infections, runny noses, dizziness, and sleep problems. It appears that practising gratitude could also help to alleviate those pesky health problems.
- For years, research has shown gratitude not only reduces stress, but it may also **play a major role in overcoming trauma**. A 2006 study published in Behavior Research and Therapy found that Vietnam War veterans with higher levels of gratitude experienced lower rates of post-traumatic stress disorder.



- Gratitude can also **encourage us to fuel our bodies with nourishing foods.** Research shows grateful people report better physical health because they tend to engage in healthy activities such as focusing on nutrition such as having more fruits and vegetables and less junk food.
- Studies have looked at how being grateful can **improve relationships and foster new ones.** Individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person, but also felt more comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship.
- Gratitude also **enhances empathy and reduces aggression.** Grateful people are more likely to behave in a prosocial manner, even when others behave less kindly, according to a study done by the University of Kentucky.

But here's the mystery.

DESPITE KNOWING
THE GREATNESS
OF GRATITUDE,
WHY DO WE STILL
STRUGGLE TO
IMPLEMENT IT?



The Struggle to be Grateful

May 23, 2024 at 18:23 PM

Why do we struggle with Gratitude?

- **We are tunnelled vision:** Life's challenges and hardships can cause us to *only* see and believe the worst.
- **The past:** Mental health, trauma, or past experiences can also make it difficult to cultivate gratitude.
- **Lack of mindfulness:** We get caught up in our daily routines and commitments, and forget to process, observe and appreciate the small joys and blessings.
- **Societal emphasis on materialism:** The emphasis on material possessions and success can lead us to focus on what we don't have, rather than what we already have.

- **Displeasure with Divine Decree:** When one is displeased with what Allah has decreed, one tends to plunge into heedlessness (ghaflah). This is because one holds an attitude that stems from denial of his All-Powerful nature and that Allah alone decrees all things.
- **When novelty becomes ordinary:** Our brains are attracted to pretty things, new possibilities and exciting adventures. But when the novelty wears off and we no longer value what we have, we tend to look for the next new thing. And the cycle of being ungrateful for what we have continues as we desire for something more.
- **Comparison with others:** We often compare our lives to others, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction and ingratitude. This habit is fueled by one's regular use of social media, where there are always something better and newer to fawn over.

- **Habit:** Gratitude often requires intentional effort and practice, which can be hard to establish as a consistent habit.
- **Lack of Remembrance of Allah:** The lack of Dhikr kills the heart while practising it will bring life and light to our lives.
- **Fear of Poverty:** Dissatisfaction will always arise if the heart clings to wealth and the pursuit of worldly riches becomes one's goal in life.
- **Love of Dunya:** When we pay too much attention to things that benefit our lower desires, we will neglect the rewards of the Hereafter.
- **Hard-heartedness:** Lack of gratitude is a sign that our heart has hardened as we are oblivious to the consequences of committing sins, and therefore neither give thanks nor repent to Allah.

to contemplate:

“YEAH,
I’M THANKFUL,
BUT...”

Would there be a “but”
if we truly are?

Signs of Ungratefulness

A list of 10 Symptoms of
Thanklessness to avoid.



Signs & Symptoms of Ingratitude

from 'A Handbook of Spiritual Medicine' by Ibn Daud

1. Perceived injustices

- When you are afflicted with calamity, you rankle with feelings of hostility, anxiety and disbelief, and even complain and lose patience.
- You become overwhelmed and depressed that you abandon your obligations and neglect your commitments.
- You live with bitter regret in your heart because of what you have been apportioned in life.
- You hold a belief that there is only this world, and this understanding creates a blind spot to the wondrousness of Allah's creation and the signs strewn throughout.

2. Abuse of Blessings

You hoard things without consideration of the needy or by using them for forbidden matters.

3. Regret & Frustration

You are frustrated by a certain outcome and wish you had taken another course of action.

4. Envy of others

- You envy another person in respect to their worldly possessions, fame etc.
- You think or say that Allah should not have given another person a blessing because you deserve it more.
- You resent it when others achieve something significant.

**5.
Addicted to
Social
Media and
Spoiling
your
Intention**

- You demonstrate an addictive (repetitive) use of social media, which leads to disappointment, displeasure and in some cases, depression.
- Your quest for pleasing people or seeking their favour interferes with your intention to deeds for the sake of Allah.

**6.
Indifference,
Laziness and
Neglecting
Obligatory
Duties**

- You show hard-heartedness, sloth and laziness regarding matters of the Hereafter.
- You demonstrate reluctance towards fulfilling the obligatory acts of worship and other religious dictates.
- You hope for the Hereafter but do nothing for it in terms of conduct and morality.

7. Miserliness

- You withhold from giving in charity or feel discomforted when spending on family.
- You hoard wealth to alleviate your fear of poverty, and is constantly worried about money.
- You create difficulty over trivial matters, and feels it hard to let go of debt to you.
- You fail to recognise the immense generosity of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ nor send prayers upon him ﷺ when his name is mentioned as he ﷺ said, ***"The miserly person is the one who does not bestow prayers upon me when I am mentioned in his presence."*** (Musnad Ahmad)

**8.
Boasting,
Arrogance
and Pride**

- You deem yourself superior to others for being blessed with knowledge and you seek adoration.
- You show arrogance to having more in terms of wealth, beauty, status, lineage or position.
- You become self-righteous when you observe others are in the state of disobedience.

**9.
Ostentation
or Showing
Off**

- You become lazy when you are alone and out of view of others.
- You increase your good actions when praised and decrease them in the absence of such praise.

10. Heedless- ness

- You possess the bounties of intellect, talent and capability but do not contemplate properly nor give thanks to Allah.
- You are heedless of what Allah has commanded and prohibited.
- You pay little attention to divine purpose and to your judgement in the Hereafter.
- You are addicted to entertaining yourself to instant pleasures such as games, shows and music.
- You largely rely on religious status updates rather than developing your personal connection with Allah.
- You mindlessly scroll on your phone for new updates and gossips.

to contemplate.

While reading through the
list, which of the 10
symptoms do you find
yourself struggling with?

Heartwork takes hardwork.

Quranic Reminders

that warns of us of these 10 Symptoms

#1

Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.

(Surah al-Baqarah 2:216)

#2

Give good news of a painful torment to those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's cause.

(Surah at-Tawbah 9:34)

#3

And warn them of the Day of Regret, when all matters will be settled, while they are 'engrossed' in heedlessness and disbelief.

(Surah Maryam 19:39)

#4

Do not crave what Allah has given some of you over others. Rather, ask Allah for His bounties. Surely Allah has knowledge of all things.

(Surah an-Nisa 4:32)

#5

Worship Allah 'alone' and associate none with Him. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful.. those who spend their wealth to show off..

(Surah an-Nisa 4:36-38)

#6

Surely the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but He outwits them. When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly only to be seen by people, hardly remembering Allah at all.

(Surah an-Nisa 4:142)

#7

The Devil threatens you with poverty and bids you to the shameful deed 'of stinginess', while Allah promises you forgiveness and 'great' bounties from Him. And Allah is All-Bountiful, All-Knowing.

(Surah al-Baqarah 2:268)

#8

And do not walk on the earth arrogantly. Surely you can neither crack the earth nor stretch to the height of the mountains.

(Surah al-Isra 17:37)

#9

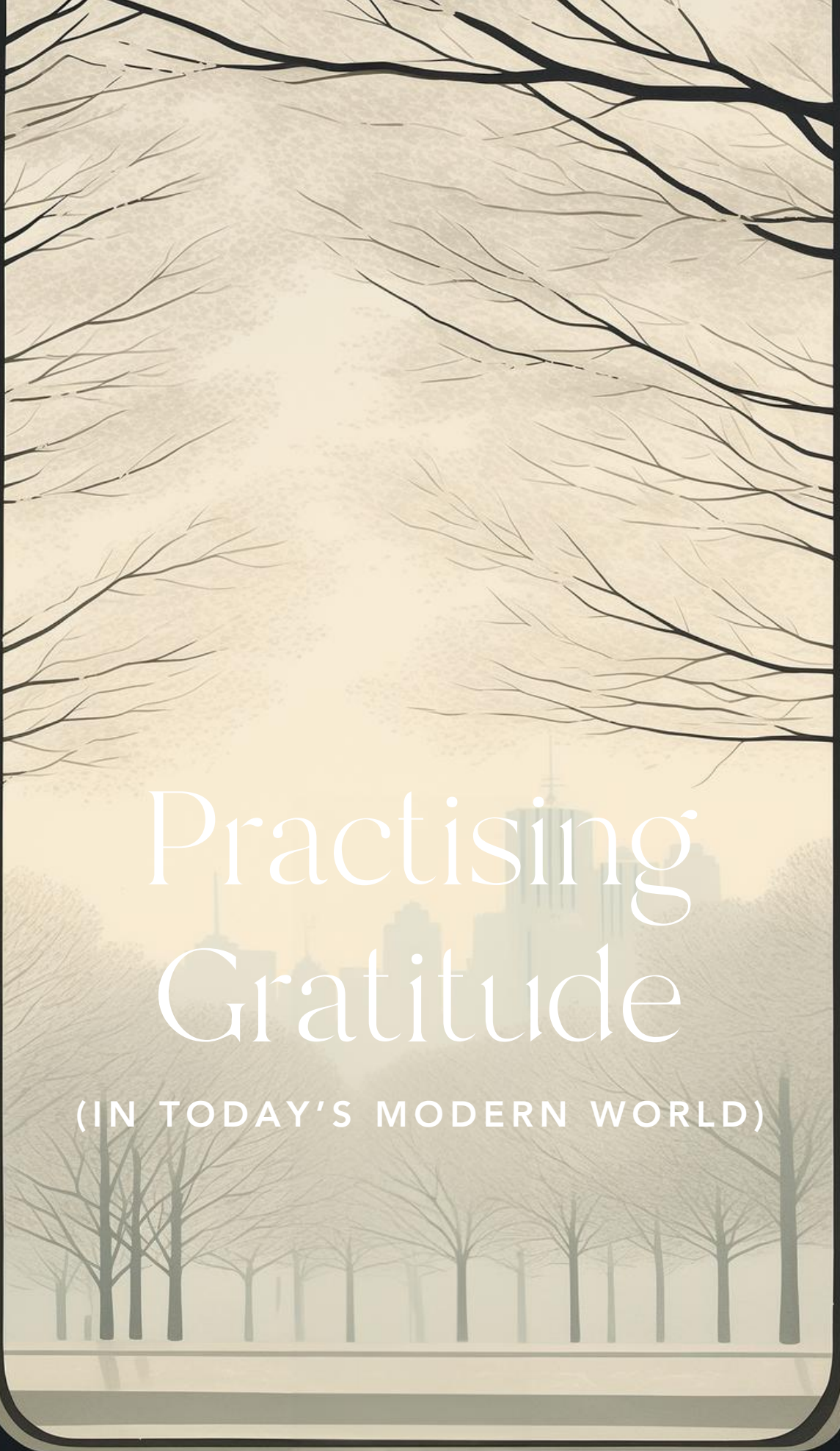
So woe to those 'hypocrites' who pray, yet are unmindful of their prayers; those who 'only' show off, and refuse to give 'even the simplest' aid.

(Surah al-Ma'un 107:4-7)

#10

Do not let your eyes look beyond them, desiring the luxuries of this worldly life. And do not obey those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follow 'only' their desires.

(Surah al-Kahf 18:28)



Practising Gratitude

(IN TODAY'S MODERN WORLD)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya states that

Shukur can be manifested through:

The Heart



The Tongue



Acts of Obedience

Shukr through the Heart



Shukr through the Heart

01

You **share the blessings** Allah has given you with the people around you because you want others to have what you have.

02

You **attribute all blessings to Allah** and **contemplate with humility and gratitude** that you are merely borrowing.

03

You **respond with compassion for those in tribulation** and gratitude for your own well-being.

04

You **deliver an inherent trust in the Creator** alone (tawakkul), which means that you act in accordance with Allah SWT's plans for you.

05

You **internalise the concept of contentment**, where you wholeheartedly accept your trials as the Divine Decree and you do not hope for its elimination.

06

You **become more conscious of Allah** when asked about what your Lord has given you, saying that all of it is good.

07

Your knowledge of the nature of this world reminds you that it is a temporary testing ground of trial and purification, so **you are more patient with afflictions and trials.**

08

You reflect upon the fact that you are the exclusive property of Allah SWT. You belong to Him and He has full right to utilise and dispose of His property as He sees fit; **you are therefore content with His Divine Decree.**

09

You constantly **consider your faults and shortcomings** and remain humble.

10

You are **conscious of the value of time**, that it is a blessing from Allah.

Shukr through the Tongue



Shukr through the Tongue

01

You **increase in silence and lessen your interactions** with people (including on social media) for fear of falling into sins and heedlessness.

04

Your expression of gratitude manifests in how **you use of your eyes, your ears, your tongue, and your limbs**, ensuring that their utilisation **conforms with the shari'ah**.

02

You **keep good news to yourself** for at least three days, like Prophet Zakariya AS, before sharing it with others (if you choose to share)

05

You **immediately engage in dhikr** at any time of difficulty and hardship.

03

You thank people as per the hadith: ***He who does not thank the people is not thankful to Allah.*** (Sunan Abi Dawud)

06

You **supplicate for those you feel envy** to be blessed and remind yourself that Allah will benefit you through the supplication.

07

You regularly
praise the
Prophet ﷺ by
sending
salutations to
Him and
emulating him in
his way of
showing
gratitude to Allah
by way of his
actions to
everything in his
life ﷺ.

08

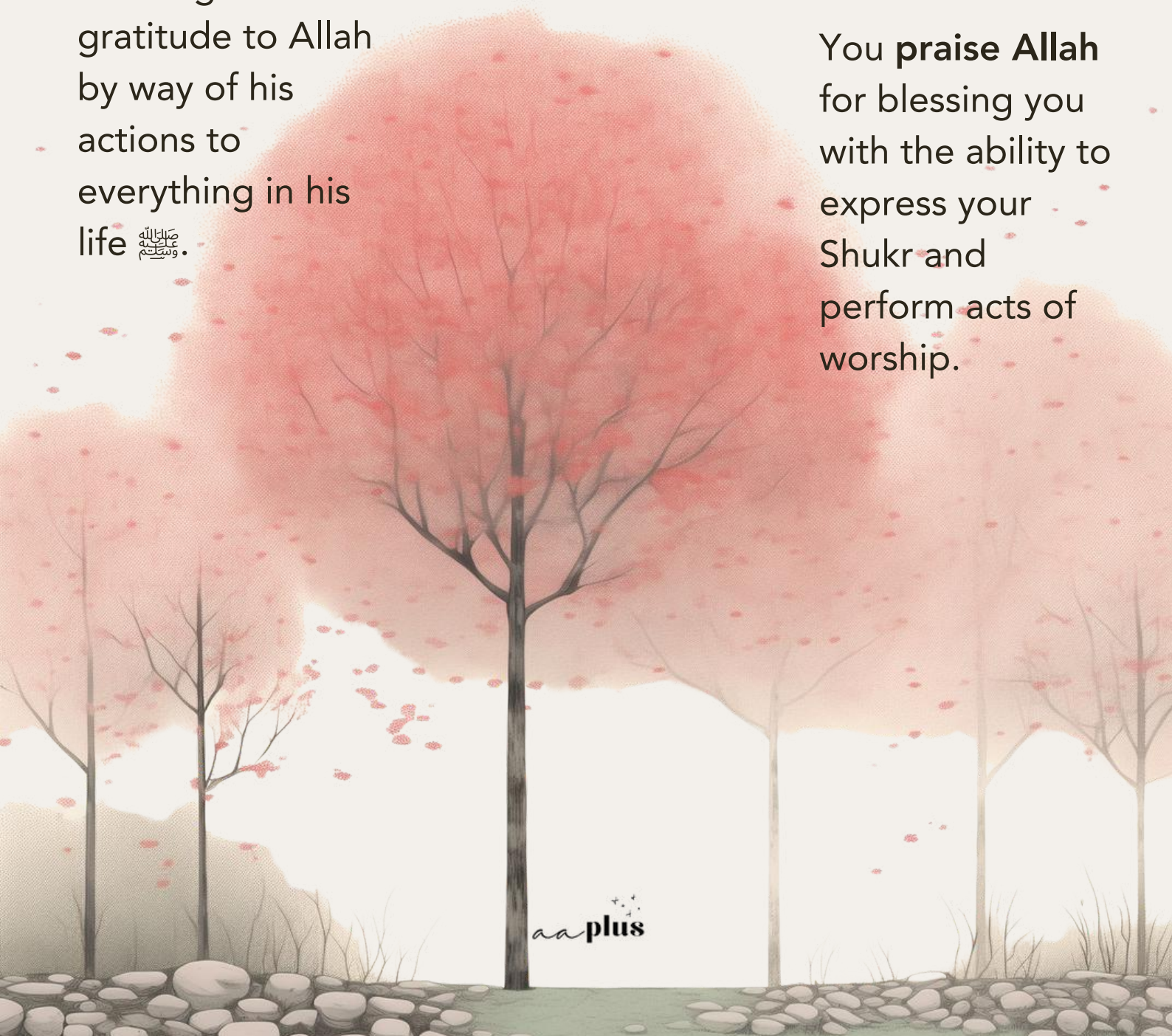
You say
'Alhamdulillah'
for everything
- blessings and
also trials -
because you
believe there
are good in
them.

09

You engage in
frequent Dhikr
and Istighfar
throughout the
day to remain
grounded and
calm.

10

You **praise Allah**
for blessing you
with the ability to
express your
Shukr and
perform acts of
worship.



Shukr through Acts of Obedience



Shukr through Acts of Obedience

01

You increase in worship when you are grateful just like Rasulullah ﷺ did when he performed long hours of Tahajjud to show his gratitude to Allah.

02

You honour the obligatory prayers by striving to perform all five prayers on time or at its earliest.

03

You frequently repent to Allah, feeling remorse for the past and resolving never to sink into disobedience again.

04

You use your time wisely and fill it with acts of worship instead of mindless activities.

05

You perform your roles and responsibilities with excellence (*Ihsan*) to show gratitude to Allah.

06

You increase in performing the Sunnah prayers and deeds.

07

You remind yourself that the quickest route to accessing Allah SWT is through the **pursuit of knowledge.**

08

You take time to **study the personalities of the Companions of the Prophet** and reflect upon their faith and characteristics that make them grateful servants.

09

You show gratitude for the blessings that you already have by **not being extravagant and wasteful** in your spending and also other choices in your life.

10

You protect your faith by **keeping good company and attending gatherings of Allah.**



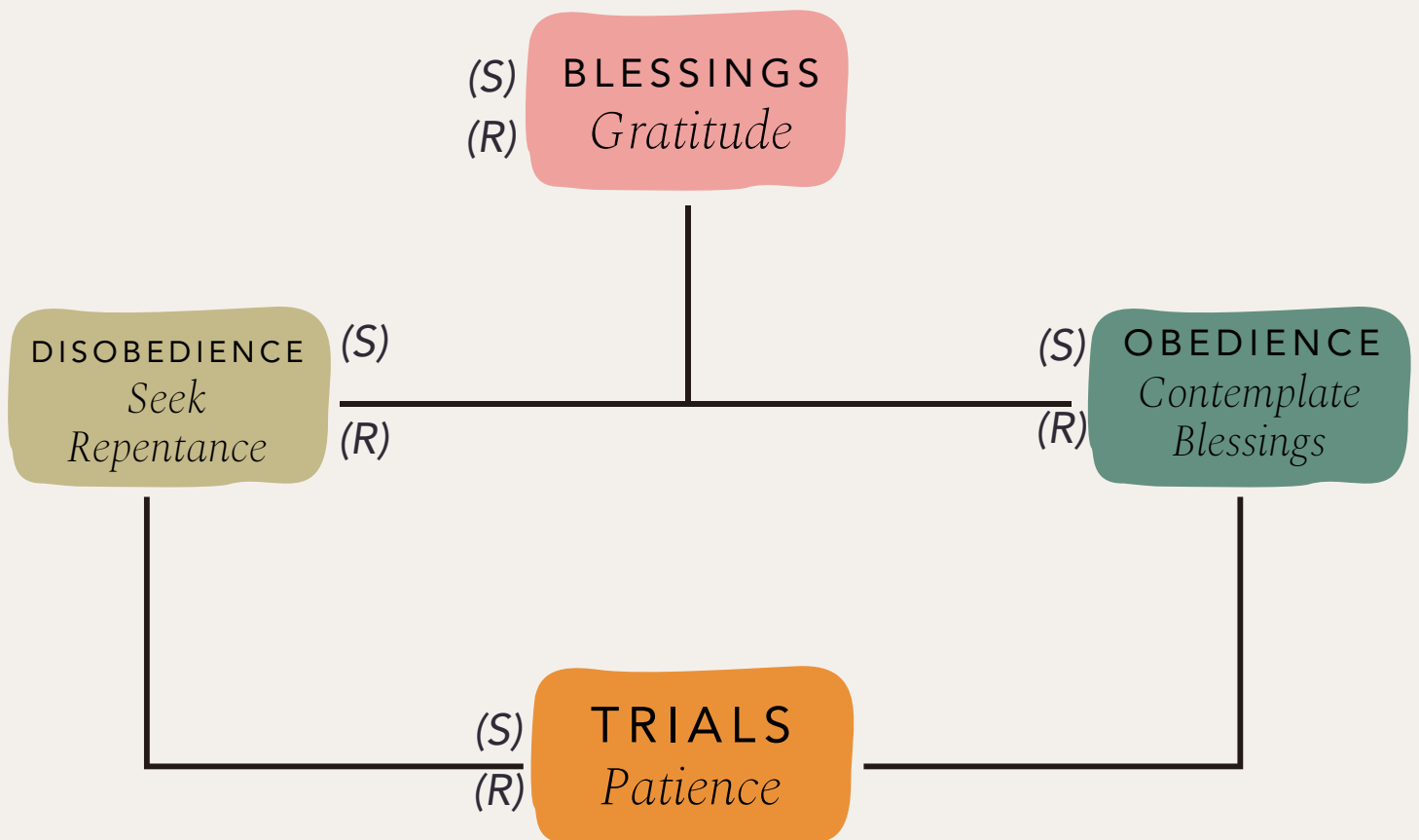
*But if you fall into anxiety
and get overwhelmed
(a norm of this modern life) ,*

IDENTIFY WHICH
OF THESE FOUR
STATES ARE YOU
IN AND LEARN
THE CORRECT
RESPONSES TO
THEM.

The 4 States of a Servant

from the Book of Aphorisms by Ibn 'Ata'illah

No matter what state we are currently experiencing in our lives, we must always respond with what pleases Allah SWT.



*(S) = Our State
(R) = Our Response

to contemplate:

Shukr. Tafakkur.
Sabr. Tawbah.

Which is your response?

Champs, as we come to the end of this publication,
I would like to share a personal favourite Ayah
of mine that will always steer me back to the
path of Gratitude whenever I feel down and out.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِن شَكَرْتُمْ
وَعَامَنْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا

Why should Allah punish
you if you are grateful and
faithful? Allah is ever
Appreciative, All-Knowing.

(An-Nisa 4:147)

I always find it beautiful that Allah SWT places
the virtue of gratitude *before* faith in this Ayah, as if to
say when we are grateful, our faith will be intact too.
And how comforting it is to know that the One Most
High is also the Most Appreciative even of our smallest
efforts, and is Ever Knowing even of our smallest deeds.

May our scales be heavy because of our Alhamdulillahs,
and our burdens, lighten, because of it.

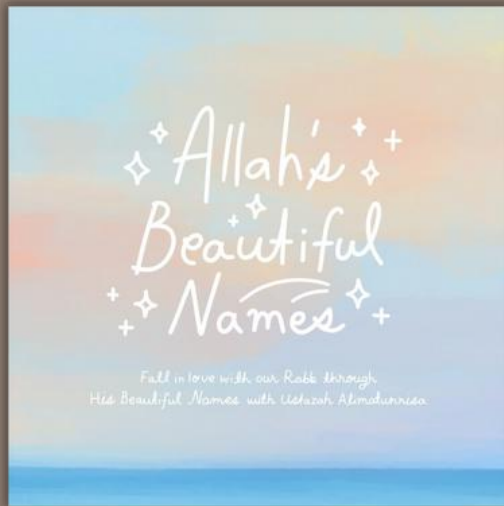
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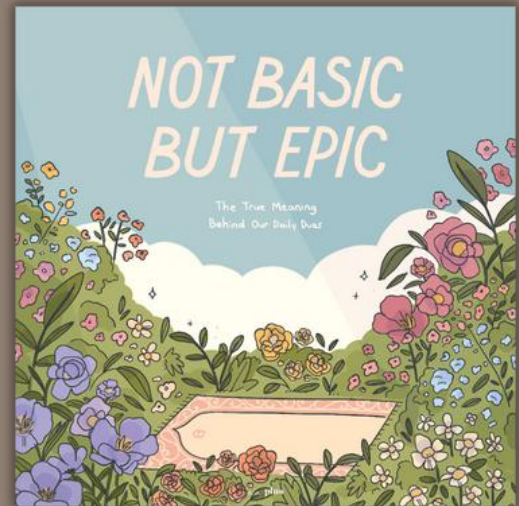
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"FURTHER READINGS"

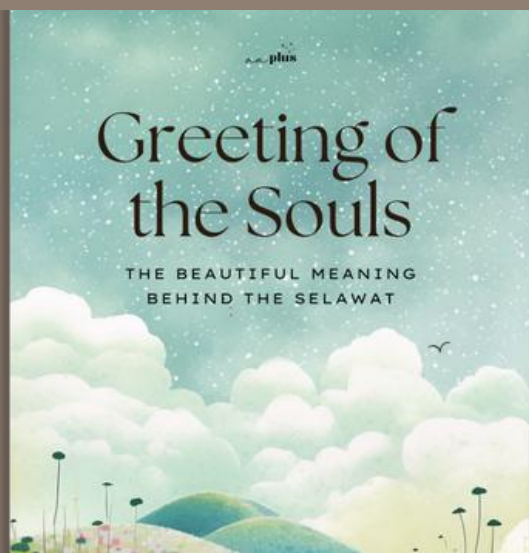
on The Knowledge Vault



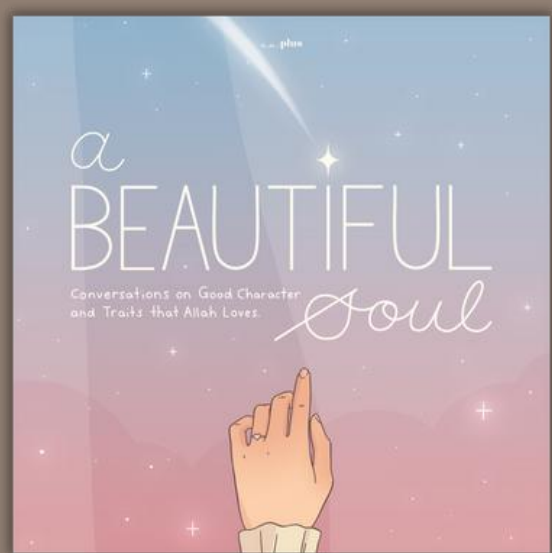
Learn more about *As-Shakur* in [Allah's Beautiful Names](#).



Unlock the secrets of Alhamdulillah in [Not Basic But Epic](#).



Fall in love with the most grateful servant through [Greetings of the Souls](#).



Tune in to the lesson on gratitude in [A Beautiful Soul](#).