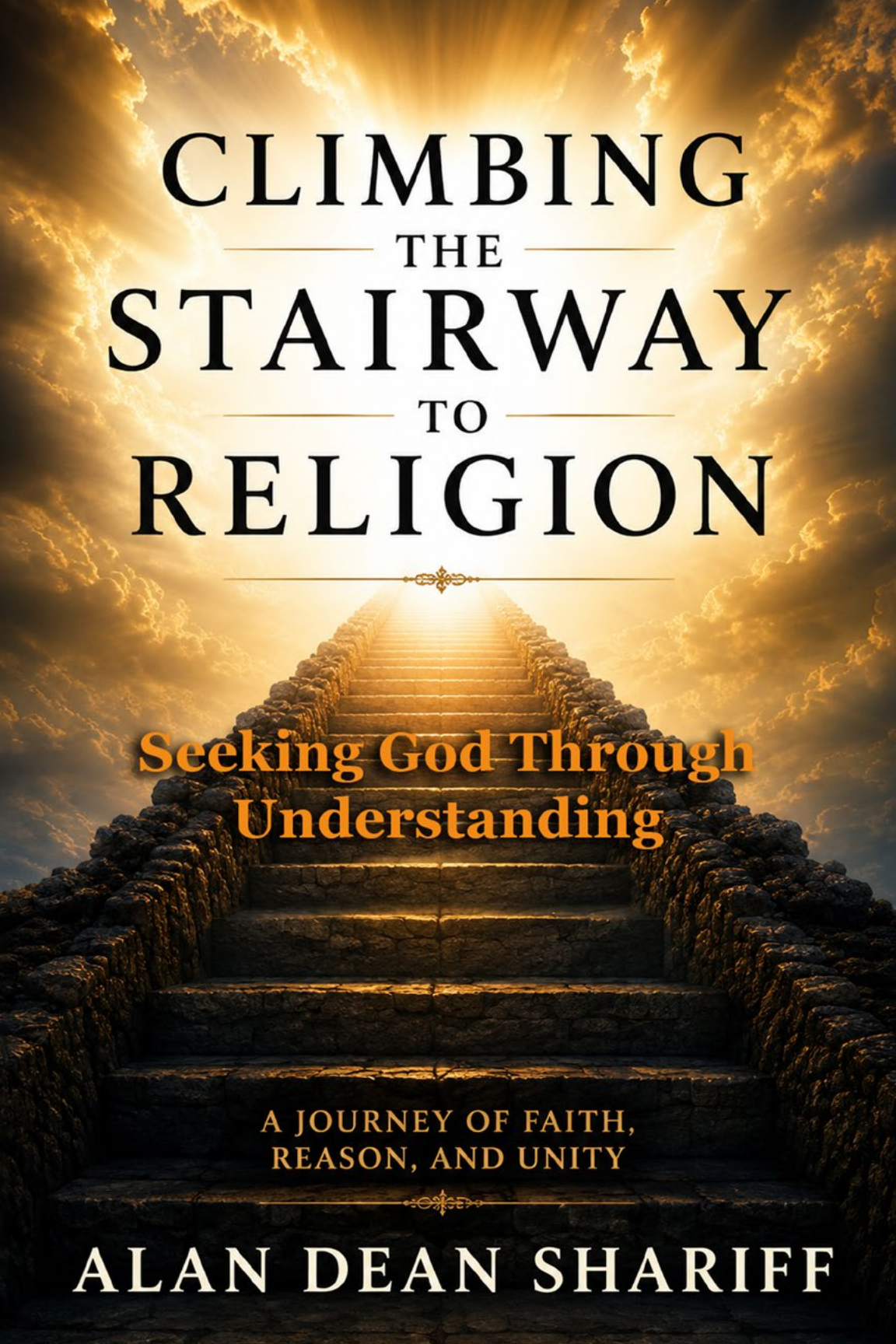
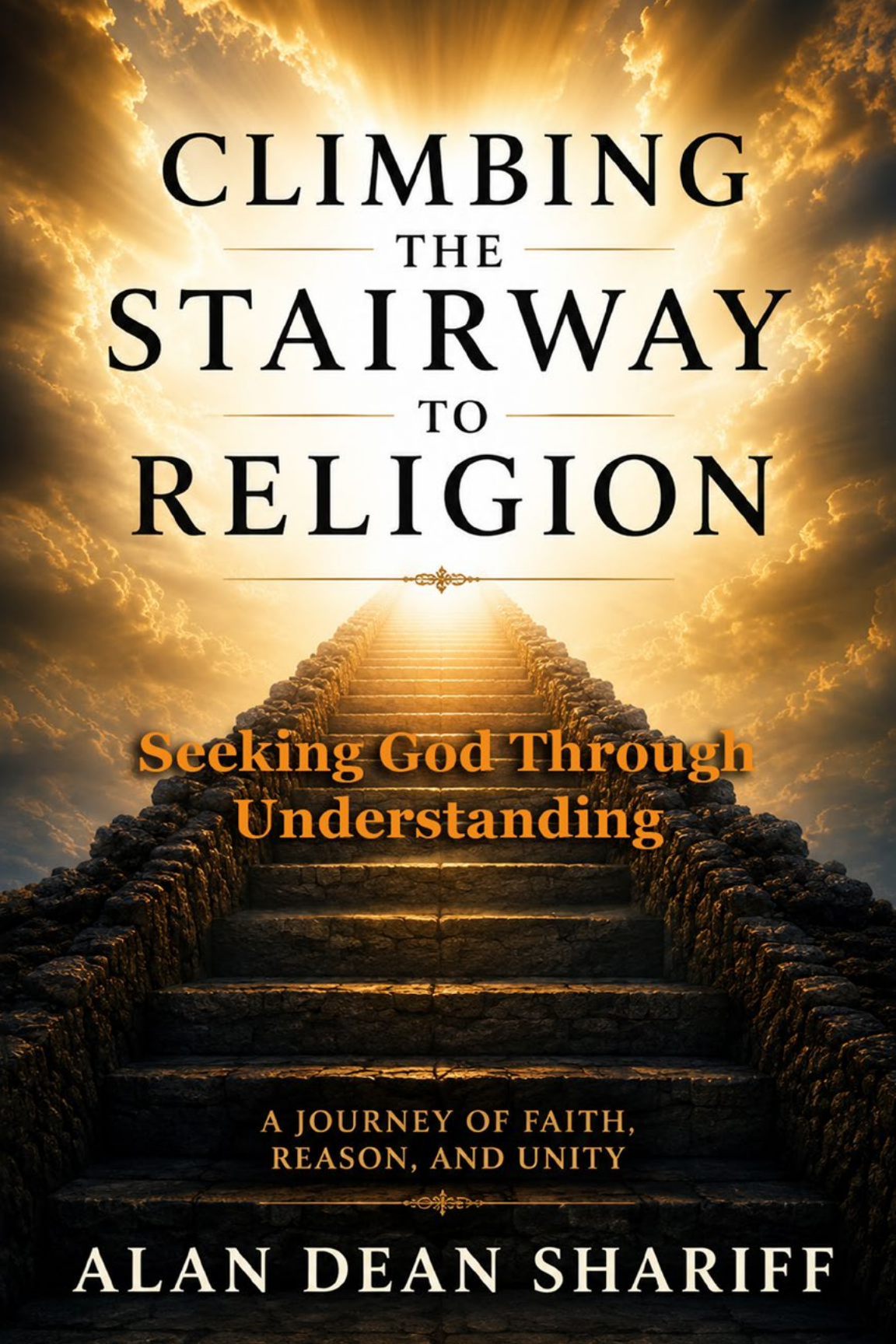




CLIMBING — THE — STAIRWAY — TO — RELIGION



**Seeking God Through
Understanding**

A JOURNEY OF FAITH,
REASON, AND UNITY

ALAN DEAN SHARIFF

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

And if all the trees on earth were pens and the sea,
with seven more seas added to it, were ink, the
Words of God would not be exhausted. Indeed, God
is Almighty, All-Wise.

Climbing The Stairway to Religion

Seeking God Through Understanding

ALAN DEAN SHARIFF

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Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the
Holy Quran.

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Acknowledgment

In the name of God, the Most Gracious,
The Most Merciful

I want to thank God, the Creator for His many blessings
and guidance in producing this book.

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Purpose of This Book

Religion has shaped civilizations, inspired acts of great compassion, and provided hope to countless people throughout history. Yet it has also become one of the most misunderstood and divisive subjects in the world. While we carefully examine science, history, medicine, law, and nearly every other field of knowledge, religion is often treated as though questioning or examining it is a threat to faith rather than a path to deeper understanding.

The purpose of this book is to encourage that careful examination.

Its goal is not to persuade readers to join a particular religion, denomination, or sect, nor to weaken anyone's faith. Instead, it invites every reader to seek a clearer understanding of God by examining the foundations of religion with honesty, reason, humility, and a sincere desire to know the truth.

This book has been written as a journey—a stairway of understanding. Each chapter builds upon the one before it, just as each step of a stairway prepares us for the next. Rather than rushing to conclusions, we will move carefully from one question to another, allowing every answer to deepen our understanding of God, His guidance, and the purpose for which He created us. As we climb each step together, my hope is that we will not only increase in knowledge but also grow in righteousness, wisdom, moral intelligence, and our desire to please God.

Throughout these pages, we will explore questions that every sincere believer should be willing to ask. What is religion? Why did God reveal it? What is righteousness? Does God ask us to inherit faith without question, or to seek understanding? Can people who believe in one God overcome the divisions that separate them and unite around truth, justice, and righteous conduct?

This book is built upon a simple conviction: truth does not fear examination. If our understanding is correct, careful study will strengthen it. If our understanding is incomplete, sincere examination allows us to grow closer to the truth. Every sincere answer becomes another step upward, preparing us for the next stage of understanding.

Ultimately, religion should not merely define what people call themselves. It should transform how they live. Its purpose is to produce people of righteousness, justice, compassion, humility, integrity, and moral intelligence—people who seek to know God, encourage what is right, forbid what is wrong, think and judge according to His guidance, and prepare themselves for the eternal life that God has promised.

The title of this book, *Climbing the Stairway to Religion*, reflects that journey. Religion is not the destination; it is the stairway. The destination is a clearer understanding of God, a life lived according to His guidance, continual growth in righteousness and moral intelligence, and, by His grace and mercy, the hope of entering His Paradise. Every chapter is another step toward that destination, preparing us to think, judge, and live according to God's guidance.

It is in that spirit that this book is offered

Preface

I did not write this book because I believe I have all the answers, nor because I consider myself more righteous or knowledgeable than others. Like every person, I am a sinner in need of God's mercy, forgiveness, and guidance. This book is simply the result of many years spent studying, asking questions, observing the world around me, and striving to understand what God expects from those who sincerely seek Him.

Throughout history, countless people have inherited their religion from their families, cultures, or communities. Many faithfully practice the traditions they have received without ever asking why they believe what they believe. Yet God has given every human being the ability to think, reason, and seek understanding. If He has entrusted us with these gifts, then surely He intends for us to use them in our search for truth. This book is an invitation to that search.

It is not written to attack any religion, denomination, or sincere believer. Nor is it written to persuade anyone to abandon their faith. My hope is exactly the opposite. I believe that careful examination does not weaken genuine faith; it strengthens it. Truth has nothing to fear from honest questions. If our understanding is correct, sincere examination will confirm it.

If our understanding is incomplete, sincere examination allows us to grow closer to the truth that God desires us to know.

The world today is deeply divided by religion, politics, race, culture, and countless other differences. Yet beneath those divisions lies a more important question: What does God want from us? Before we identify ourselves by religious labels, nationalities, or traditions, we are first human beings created by the same God, entrusted with the same responsibility to seek what is right, forbid what is wrong, and prepare ourselves for the eternal life that He has promised.

As I continued to study the scriptures and reflect on the condition of our world, I became increasingly convinced that many of our divisions are not caused by God's message but by our misunderstanding of it.

One of the greatest obstacles to understanding truth is our tendency to cling to what is familiar. Whether it is religious traditions, cultural customs, long-held opinions, or ideas inherited from those we love and trust, letting go of beliefs that have become part of our identity is never easy. Yet genuine growth requires the humility to examine what we believe and the courage to leave behind whatever is found to be inconsistent with God's truth.

That is why I have chosen to describe this journey as Climbing the Stairway of Religion. A person climbing a stairway cannot remain on the same step and continue upward. Each new step requires leaving the one below behind. In the same way, spiritual growth often requires us to leave behind incomplete understanding as God leads us to greater truth. Every chapter in this book represents another step in that journey, building upon the one before it.

My hope is that, together, we will climb that stairway one step at a time, always seeking a clearer understanding of God and His guidance.

This journey is not about abandoning faith but strengthening it. It is about replacing assumptions with understanding, inherited conclusions with personal conviction, and division with the unity that God intended for those who sincerely seek Him. Every step toward truth brings us one step closer to God, while every step away from misunderstanding brings us one step farther from the divisions that have separated believers for generations.

My desire is not that every reader agrees with every conclusion presented in these pages. Rather, I hope this book inspires every sincere believer to study more deeply, think more carefully, and seek God more earnestly. The search for truth is not completed in a single book, nor does any one person possess complete understanding. It is a lifelong journey of learning, humility, repentance, and spiritual growth.

If these pages encourage even one person to seek God with greater sincerity, to place truth above inherited tradition, to pursue righteousness above personal preference, and to strengthen their relationship with the Creator, then the years devoted to writing this book will have been worthwhile.

Ultimately, everything that is true comes from God alone. Whatever understanding has been gained while writing these pages has been by His guidance, mercy, and blessing. Whatever mistakes remain are my own, and I pray that God will correct them. May He accept this work, forgive its shortcomings, and make it a means of encouraging others to seek Him with sincerity. The final outcome belongs to Him alone, and all praise is due to God.

Alan Dean Shariff

Introduction

Seeking Truth

Every important field of human knowledge advances through careful examination. Scientists test their theories. Historians examine evidence. Judges weigh testimony. Doctors study diseases before prescribing treatment. Engineers calculate before they build. In every discipline, progress depends upon a willingness to ask questions, examine evidence, and follow the truth wherever it leads.

Why should religion be the one subject exempt from that same careful examination?

For many people, religion is the most important subject they will ever study. It shapes how they understand God, how they live their lives, how they treat others, and what they believe will happen after death. If any subject deserves sincere study and careful reflection, surely it is religion.

This book invites the reader to begin climbing the stairway to religion. It is not a journey completed in a single step, nor is understanding gained all at once. Each chapter builds upon the one before it, guiding the reader from one question to the next and allowing every answer to prepare the way for greater understanding.

Just as a stairway is climbed one step at a time, so too is the search for God's truth.

Yet throughout history, countless people have simply inherited the religion of their parents, culture, or community without ever asking whether their beliefs truly reflect what God wants them to understand. Tradition has often replaced examination, and loyalty to inherited beliefs has too often taken precedence over the sincere search for truth.

The purpose of careful examination is not to weaken faith but to strengthen understanding.

Truth has nothing to fear from honest questions. If our beliefs are true, sincere examination will strengthen our confidence. If our understanding is incomplete, careful examination allows us to grow closer to the truth. In either case, the sincere search for understanding honors both the mind God has given us and the responsibility He has placed upon every individual.

The questions explored in this book are not intended to create doubt but to encourage understanding:

- What is religion?
- Why did God reveal it?
- What is righteousness?
- Does God ask us merely to inherit faith, or does He expect us to understand it?
- Can people who worship the same Creator overcome the divisions that separate them?
- Can there be lasting peace without righteousness?
- Can justice exist apart from truth?

These are not new questions. They are among the oldest questions humanity has ever asked. Every generation must answer them for itself. This book does not ask readers to surrender their ability to think. It asks them to use it.

Nor does it ask anyone to accept conclusions without examination. Instead, it invites every reader to study the evidence, reflect upon the scriptures, and seek God with humility, sincerity, and an open heart.

The goal is not to prove one religious group superior to another. God's truth does not belong to any denomination, sect, or institution. It belongs to God alone. Our responsibility is not to defend inherited traditions but to seek His guidance wherever it leads.

Throughout history, sincere men and women have sought God above personal comfort, social acceptance, and inherited customs. Their willingness to seek truth transformed not only their own lives but also the course of human history.

That same invitation remains before every one of us today. Many people assume that if they come to believe the Quran contains God's guidance, they must also adopt the religious label "Muslim." I do not believe those two things are inseparable. When we define ourselves primarily by a religious label, people naturally associate us with everything that has been done, taught, praised, or condemned under that label throughout history. Yet God's judgment will not be based on the reputation of a religious community but on the individual faith, righteousness, and conduct of each person. For this reason, I define my faith not by a religious label but by the submission of my will to God.

I follow the teachings of the Quran by making five daily prayers, observing Ramadan, and striving to live according to its guidance. Describing my faith as the submission of my will to God removes the divisions between me and other righteous people, regardless of the religious labels they use.

On the other hand, when people define their faith primarily through the labels "Islam" or "Muslim," it can create separation between them and those who do not share that particular identity.

Divisions also exist within Islam itself, including Sunni, Shia, and Sufi traditions, even though they all follow the same Quran. Similar divisions exist among Christians through denominations that share the same Bible. These divisions often prevent believers from fully recognizing one another on the basis of righteousness alone.

Recognizing the Bible or the Quran as divine truth does not require believers to adopt religious labels or identify themselves with denominations, sects, or exclusive groups. God's guidance is greater than the names people give themselves.

The value of truth is measured not merely by its earthly benefits but by its eternal consequences.

For this reason, seeking truth is not simply an intellectual exercise. It is one of life's greatest responsibilities. The decisions we make concerning God, righteousness, and truth influence not only the society we build in this world but also the eternal future we prepare for in the next.

Understanding rarely comes all at once. It is much like the rising of the morning sun. The light does not appear instantly but grows steadily brighter until the landscape can be seen clearly. In the same way, every sincere step toward truth brings greater understanding, and every increase in understanding leaves less room for misunderstanding. Ultimately, when the light comes on, the darkness has no choice but to go away.

As we climb this stairway together, my hope is that each chapter will add a little more light to our understanding, guiding us one step at a time toward a clearer knowledge of God, a life of greater righteousness, and a faith strengthened by understanding rather than weakened by fear. Religion is not the destination; it is the stairway. The destination is God, His pleasure, and, by His grace and mercy, the hope of entering His Paradise.

It is in that spirit that this journey begins

Author's Perspective

The Three Steps to a Problem

One of the most valuable lessons I learned came during leadership school in the United States Marine Corps. There, we were taught a simple but powerful leadership principle called The Three Steps to a Problem. Although it was designed to prepare Marines for leadership, I eventually discovered that it could be applied to nearly every important question in life.

The Three Steps to a Problem are:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Estimate the situation.
3. Take action.

These three simple steps have guided the way I approach problems ever since, and they continue to influence the way I examine every important question.

The first step is to identify the problem. Before attempting to solve anything, we must clearly understand what the problem actually is. Many people begin searching for answers before they have correctly identified the problem they are trying to solve.

As a result, they often arrive at solutions that fail because they were directed at the wrong problem.

The second step is to estimate the situation. This means determining the cause of the problem and carefully evaluating the circumstances surrounding it. Every problem has a cause. Unless that cause is understood, any solution is likely to address only the symptoms while leaving the real problem unchanged. A correct understanding of the situation is essential before meaningful action can be taken.

The third step is to take action. Once the problem has been correctly identified and the situation properly estimated, action must be taken. Without action, no problem is ever solved. If no action is taken, the problem will simply continue to grow. Problems do not disappear on their own. Left unaddressed, they usually become more difficult to solve over time.

Over the years, I realized that this same process applies to the search for truth. Before asking which religion is true, we must first identify the problem. Before attempting to solve the world's religious divisions, we must carefully estimate the situation by examining what has caused those divisions. Only then are we prepared to take action by seeking solutions that address the root of the problem rather than merely responding to its symptoms.

This simple leadership principle has influenced the way I have approached every major challenge throughout my life. It has shaped the way I study history, religion, and culture, and it has guided the way this book has been written. Throughout these pages, we will first identify the questions that need to be answered, then estimate the situation by carefully examining its causes, and finally consider what action God's guidance calls us to take. My hope is that this same approach will help readers not only understand the ideas presented in this book but also apply these three steps to the challenges they face in their own lives.

Beginning with the End in Mind

After leaving the United States Marine Corps, I began working on the railroad as a freight train conductor foreman. Each day, I was responsible for servicing anywhere from six to a dozen industrial customers by removing and replacing their railroad cars. It was there that I learned another lesson that would shape the way I approached every major project for the rest of my life. At the beginning of each workday, I discovered that the most effective way to organize my work was not to begin with the first job, but with the last one.

I would first determine the final task that needed to be completed. Then I would work backward, planning the job before it, and then the one before that, until I had reached the very first task of the day. Once the entire plan was complete, I simply began with the first job. As the work progressed, I remained ready to adjust the plan whenever obstacles or changing circumstances required it, while never losing sight of the final destination. Because every task had already been arranged in the proper order, each one naturally prepared the way for the one that followed.

This simple method taught me that every successful journey begins with a clear destination rather than merely a starting point. When the destination is clearly understood, the path leading to it becomes much easier to organize.

Over time, I realized that this same principle applies to far more than railroad work. It applies to building a business, raising a family, writing a book, and even seeking God. Before beginning any journey, it is wise to know where you hope to arrive. Once the destination is clear, every step can be planned so that it naturally prepares the way for the next, while remaining willing to adapt whenever greater understanding reveals a better path.

That same principle has shaped the structure of this book. Each chapter has been written as another step in the stairway, preparing the reader for the next stage of understanding until the destination is finally reached.

This book has been written using that same approach. Rather than beginning with isolated questions, it begins with the destination. The destination is a clearer understanding of God, a life of righteousness, moral intelligence, and religion without divisions, so that we may be among those who will enjoy God's Paradise forever in the life to come. From that destination, we work backward, asking what questions must be answered, what misunderstandings must be examined, and what truths must be understood in order to arrive there.

I have found that this approach not only creates better plans but also reveals when we are moving in the wrong direction. If a step does not lead toward the destination, it should be reconsidered before continuing. In this way, every decision can be measured by whether it brings us closer to the goal or farther away from it.

A Final Perspective

The principles described in these pages have guided the way I approach problems, organize my work, and search for truth. They have served me well throughout my life and have shaped the way this book has been written. Yet, as valuable as these principles are, they are not the source of truth or wisdom.

Every good thing we learn, every truth we discover, every opportunity we receive, and every success we achieve ultimately comes by the guidance, wisdom, and blessings of God. Without His guidance, our knowledge is incomplete. Without His mercy, our efforts are insufficient. Without His will, no plan can succeed.

For this reason, I recognize that whatever understanding is presented in this book has been made possible only through God's guidance and His countless blessings throughout my life. Any truth found within these pages belongs to Him, not to me. If I have understood something correctly, I thank God for guiding me to it. If I have misunderstood anything, I ask His forgiveness and pray that He will continue to guide me to a clearer understanding of His truth.

It is my sincere prayer that God accepts this effort, forgives its shortcomings, and uses it to encourage others to seek Him with humility, sincerity, and a desire to understand His guidance.

Ultimately, the success of this book, like every worthwhile endeavor, rests not in human ability but in the guidance, mercy, and will of God.

What Is Religion?

The First Step

Section 1. What Is Religion?

Quran 67:2 He who created death and life that He may test which of you is best in deed. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Oft-Forgiving.

Before we can understand any religion, we must first understand why God revealed religion in the first place. Throughout history, people have often defined religion by its outward appearance. They think of churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, religious leaders, or the names by which different groups identify themselves. While these things may play an important role in religious life, they do not explain the true purpose of religion.

Religion begins with God, not with man

It is God's guidance to humanity, revealing how He desires us to believe, how He desires us to live, and how we should prepare ourselves for the eternal life that awaits every soul. At its heart, religion is not primarily about belonging to an institution or identifying with a particular religious tradition. It is about developing a right relationship with the Creator through faith, understanding, righteousness, and obedience to His guidance.

For this reason, religion is deeply personal. Every human being will one day stand before God alone. No family member, religious leader, nation, denomination, or community will answer for another person. Each individual is responsible for seeking the truth, striving to understand God's guidance, and living according to it. While communities of faith can encourage and support us, they cannot replace our personal responsibility before God.

This understanding changes the way we think about religion. Rather than asking, "What religion do I belong to?" We should first ask, "What does God want me to believe, understand, and become?" That question shifts our attention away from religious identity and toward the purpose for which God revealed His guidance.

Throughout this book, religion will be examined from that perspective. It is not presented as a competition between denominations or sects, but as God's invitation for every person to seek Him sincerely, understand His guidance, and pursue righteousness. When viewed in this light, religion becomes far more than a system of beliefs or religious practices. It becomes a lifelong journey of knowing God, growing in understanding, and preparing for the eternal life He has promised to those who sincerely seek Him.

Section 2. Why Did God Create Human Beings

Quran 67:2 He who created death and life that He may test which of you is best in deed. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Oft-Forgiving.

One of the most important questions every person must answer is, “Why am I here?” Before we can understand religion, righteousness, or God’s guidance, we must first understand the purpose for which human life was created.

Many people spend their lives pursuing wealth, pleasure, fame, education, or personal success, believing these are life’s highest goals. While each of these may have value in its proper place, none of them explains why God created humanity. If they were life’s ultimate purpose, then a person’s value would be measured by what they possess rather than by who they become. The scriptures present a different answer.

God created human beings with the freedom to choose between right and wrong and placed them in this world as a test of character. Life is not merely an opportunity to exist but an opportunity to demonstrate faith, righteousness, justice, compassion, humility, and obedience to the Creator. Every decision we make contributes to that test.

This understanding changes the way we view both success and failure. Success is not measured primarily by wealth, power, popularity, or social status but by the quality of our character and the righteousness of our conduct.

Likewise, hardship is not necessarily a sign of God’s displeasure, nor is prosperity always evidence of His approval. Both blessings and difficulties may serve as part of the test through which God reveals what is within our hearts.

If life is a test, then religion becomes the instruction God has given humanity to prepare us for it. His commandments are not intended to restrict human happiness but to guide us toward lives that reflect wisdom, justice, mercy, and righteousness. Like a teacher preparing students for an examination, God has not left humanity without guidance. Through revelation, He has shown us the path that leads to success both in this life and in the life to come.

Understanding this purpose transforms the way we approach religion. Instead of asking what religion can do for us, we begin asking how faithfully we are fulfilling the purpose for which God created us. Religion ceases to be merely an identity or tradition and becomes a daily commitment to living according to God's guidance.

Every person, regardless of nationality, race, or religious background, shares this same calling. We have all been given life, the ability to choose, and the responsibility to answer to God for the choices we make. Recognizing this shared purpose reminds us that our greatest responsibility is not simply to live, but to live in a manner that pleases the One who gave us life.

Section 3. Personal Responsibility

Quran 17:36 Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—about all those will be questioned.

If every human being has been created to live a life that pleases God, then every human being also bears a personal responsibility to seek the truth. No one can fulfill that responsibility on behalf of another. Parents can teach their children. Religious leaders can offer guidance. Communities can encourage righ-

teousness. But in the end, every individual must answer to God for the choices they have made and the life they have lived, even if what they inherited was wrong.

This personal responsibility is one of the great equalizers of humanity. God does not judge us by our nationality, race, wealth, education, or family background. Nor will He judge us according to the popularity of the religious group to which we belonged. Instead, each person will stand before Him alone, accountable for what they believed, what they understood, and how faithfully they acted upon the knowledge they were given.

For this reason, religion cannot simply be inherited. While we often inherit our family's traditions, language, and customs, our relationship with God must eventually become our own. Every sincere believer reaches a point where inherited faith must become personal conviction. A child may begin by trusting the beliefs of parents or teachers, but maturity requires each individual to seek understanding for themselves.

God has given every person the ability to observe, reason, reflect, and learn. These are not accidental gifts; they are part of the responsibility He has placed upon us. To ignore these abilities and blindly follow inherited beliefs without examination is to neglect one of God's greatest blessings. Faith and understanding are not enemies. They are companions that strengthen one another as we continue to seek God's guidance with humility.

This responsibility also requires honesty. Sometimes the search for truth challenges ideas we have held for many years. It may ask us to reconsider traditions that have been passed down for generations or to question conclusions we have accepted without careful examination. Such moments can be uncomfortable, but genuine spiritual growth often begins where comfortable assumptions end.

Seeking God's truth requires the courage to follow the evidence wherever it leads and the humility to accept correction when our understanding is incomplete.

Personal responsibility does not mean walking alone. God has blessed humanity with teachers, scholars, families, and communities that can encourage us in our search for truth. Yet their role is to assist our journey, not replace it. No human being can believe for another, repent for another, or stand before God in another person's place.

Recognizing this truth changes the way we approach religion. Instead of asking, "What have I been taught to believe?" We begin asking, "What does God want me to understand?" That question transforms religion from inherited identity into a life-long pursuit of truth, righteousness, and a deeper relationship with the Creator.

Section 4. Why We Inherit Religion

Quran 2:170 And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has revealed,' they say, 'No, we will follow what we found our fathers following.' Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?

Most people do not choose their religion after carefully examining all the available evidence. Instead, they inherit it. A child born into a Christian family is usually raised as a Christian. A child born into a Muslim family is usually raised as a Muslim. A child born into a Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or other religious family is generally raised within that same tradition.

This pattern is so common that many people never stop to question it. They assume that the religion into which they were born must also be the religion God intended for them to follow.

Yet the place of our birth, the culture we inherit, and the family into which we are born are circumstances over which we have no control. They are gifts from God, but they are not substitutes for personal understanding.

There is nothing wrong with parents teaching their children about God. In fact, parents have a responsibility to guide and educate their children according to the best understanding they possess. Every generation depends upon the generation before it to pass on knowledge, values, and moral principles. Without that guidance, children would have no foundation upon which to build.

The challenge comes when inherited beliefs are never examined. Childhood faith is the beginning of our spiritual journey, but it should not be its destination. As we mature, God expects us to use the minds He has given us. The faith we inherited should gradually become a faith we understand and personally embrace.

This principle applies to every religious community without exception. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and others all tend to inherit the beliefs of their families. This is a human pattern, not the characteristic of any one religion. Recognizing this reality should encourage humility rather than pride, because it reminds us that had we been born into a different family or culture, we might very well have inherited different beliefs.

That realization should not weaken our faith; it should deepen our commitment to seek God's guidance. Instead of asking, "What religion did I inherit?" We should ask, "Does my understanding reflect what God wants me to know?" Those are two very different questions.

God has not asked us merely to preserve inherited traditions. He has called us to seek Him with sincerity, understanding, and righteousness.

Respecting our parents and appreciating the faith they taught us does not remove our personal responsibility before God. Every believer must eventually make the journey from inherited belief to personal conviction.

For this reason, the purpose of this book is not to persuade readers to abandon the faith of their parents, but to encourage them to understand it more deeply. If careful examination strengthens the faith they inherited, they should be grateful. If it reveals areas where their understanding is incomplete, they should be equally grateful, for every step toward truth is a step closer to God.

Does God ask us merely to inherit faith, or does He expect us to understand it?

Section 5. Seeking Understanding

Quran 31:27 And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean were ink, with seven more oceans to replenish it, the Words of God would not be exhausted. Indeed, God is Exalted in Might and Wise.

The Quran paints a remarkable picture. Even if every tree on earth became a pen and every ocean became ink, with seven more oceans added to replenish it, the words of God would still not be exhausted. This reminds us that God's wisdom and knowledge are without limit. No individual, no generation, and no community will ever exhaust the depth of His guidance.

If this is true, then why should we ever stop seeking understanding? Every new insight opens the door to another. Every answer prepares us for another question. Since God's wisdom is infinite, the sincere believer's pursuit of understanding should

never come to an end.

Yet many people seem to approach faith in the opposite way. Once they come to believe in God or become committed to a particular religion, they often stop seeking understanding. Some fear that asking questions or continuing to learn may weaken their faith or even lead them away from what they already believe. As a result, belief sometimes becomes the end of learning rather than its beginning.

But God's infinite wisdom points us in the opposite direction. If His words can never be exhausted, then our desire to understand them should never come to an end. Faith should awaken within us an even greater desire to learn. The more we come to know God, the more we should recognize how much remains to be understood.

Belief should be the beginning of learning, not the end

One of the greatest gifts God has given humanity is the ability to learn. From the moment we are born, we begin acquiring knowledge from our parents, teachers, experiences, and the world around us. Without this ability, civilization itself could not exist. Every discovery, every invention, and every advancement throughout history have been built upon the willingness to learn and to understand.

If knowledge is essential in every other area of life, how much more important is it when seeking to know God? Seeking understanding is not the same as doubting God. It is the sincere desire to know Him more completely.

A person who seeks understanding is not rejecting faith; rather, they are strengthening it by building it upon knowledge instead of assumption. Genuine faith and genuine understanding are companions, not enemies. Each strengthens the other.

Many sincere believers also depend almost entirely upon the understanding of their ministers, priests, rabbis, imams, or other religious teachers. God has blessed every religious community with men and women who devote themselves to studying His guidance, and their knowledge can be of great value. We should appreciate those who teach us and benefit from their wisdom.

Yet no teacher can assume our personal responsibility before God. Religious leaders can explain, encourage, and guide, but they cannot believe for us, understand for us, or stand before God in our place. The responsibility to seek understanding belongs to every believer.

Throughout my life, I have often heard people say, "I like what you are saying, but I must first see what my preacher says about it." While there is nothing wrong with seeking the counsel of a trusted teacher, our search for truth should not end there. God has given each of us a mind to think, a heart to reflect, and the responsibility to seek His guidance sincerely. A teacher should help us grow in understanding, not replace our responsibility to pursue it.

The greatest teachers encourage questions because they understand that sincere questions are often the beginning of deeper faith. A believer who seeks understanding with humility does not dishonor a faithful teacher. Rather, that believer honors both God and the gifts of reason and understanding that He has given.

Throughout the scriptures, God repeatedly calls upon people to observe, reflect, reason, remember, and understand. These invitations remind us that faith is not intended to be blind. God does not ask us to stop thinking when we approach Him. Instead, He calls us to use the minds He has given us in the pursuit of His truth.

Imagine, for a moment, that you were given the opportunity to sit in the presence of God and ask Him whatever you wished. What questions would you ask? Would you have many questions, a few questions, or none at all?

If you found that you had no questions, what would that say about your understanding? Have you already learned everything God wants you to know? If God's words can never be exhausted, how could any sincere believer ever reach the point where there is nothing more to learn?

A believer without questions is a believer who has stopped growing

These are not questions of rebellion against God. They are questions born from a sincere desire to know Him more deeply, to understand His guidance more clearly, and to live more faithfully according to His will. Every answer should inspire new questions, because every increase in understanding reveals that God's wisdom is greater still.

This search also requires humility. None of us begins with complete understanding, and none of us will possess complete knowledge in this life. Every sincere seeker must be willing to acknowledge what they do not know, to learn from others, and, when necessary, to correct their own misunderstandings. Humility opens the door to wisdom, while pride often closes it.

Seeking understanding also requires patience. Just as the morning light does not appear all at once, understanding often develops gradually. One question leads to another. One answer prepares us for the next.

Every sincere step toward truth brings greater clarity, until what was once hidden becomes easier to see. As the light grows brighter, misunderstanding has less room to remain.

Ultimately, when the light comes on, the darkness has no choice but to go away.

Perhaps this lifelong pursuit of understanding is itself part of the purpose for which God created us. Throughout our lives we continue learning, growing, and drawing nearer to Him. Every increase in understanding is another blessing, another opportunity to live more righteously, and another step toward the eternal destination for which God created us.

The purpose of this book is not to claim perfect understanding but to encourage that lifelong pursuit. My hope is that these pages will inspire readers to ask honest questions, examine the evidence carefully, and seek God's guidance with sincere hearts. Through understanding, faith grows stronger, righteousness becomes clearer, and our relationship with God becomes deeper.

Does God ask us merely to believe, or does He also ask us to understand what we believe?

Section 6. The Race to Please God

Quran 5:48 So compete with one another in doing good. To God you will all return, and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.

Life has often been described as a race. People compete for wealth, power, education, success, recognition, and countless other achievements. From childhood we are encouraged to strive to be first, to accomplish more, and to surpass those around us. While ambition can be beneficial when directed toward worthy goals, the question remains: What is the greatest goal for which we should strive?

The scriptures provide an answer that is both simple and profound.

Rather than competing against one another for worldly success alone, God calls us to compete in doing what is right. The greatest race in life is not the race to become richer than our neighbor, more powerful than our rivals, or more admired than those around us. It is the race to become more pleasing to God.

This changes the way we measure success. If pleasing God becomes our highest goal, then our greatest victories are no longer measured by possessions, titles, or popularity. They are measured by righteousness, integrity, compassion, justice, humility, and obedience to God's guidance.

This race is unique because everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Unlike earthly competitions, where one person's victory often means another person's defeat, the race to please God invites every person to become a winner. Every act of kindness, every honest decision, every sincere prayer, every effort to seek understanding, and every step toward righteousness moves us closer to our true destination.

This race also changes the way we view one another. Instead of seeing other believers as competitors to be defeated, we begin to see them as companions encouraging one another toward righteousness. The success of another righteous person does not diminish our own. On the contrary, their example should inspire us to become better ourselves.

The world's religious divisions often encourage people to compete over who possesses the correct religious identity. Yet the scriptures repeatedly direct our attention toward something far greater—our conduct before God.

The question on the Day of Judgment will not be who belonged to the most respected religious group, but whether we sought God's guidance sincerely and lived according to it.

The race to please God is therefore not a race of religious labels but a race of righteous living

Every day presents another opportunity to move forward. Every decision becomes another step toward or away from the destination we considered in the previous section. Just as a runner remains focused on the finish line, the believer remains focused on pleasing God, knowing that every sincere effort, no matter how small, is seen by Him.

Perhaps this is why seeking understanding is so important. The better we understand God's guidance, the better we are able to live in a way that pleases Him. Knowledge is not the finish line; it is one of the tools that helps us run the race more faithfully.

At the end of this race, every human being will stand before the same Creator. Earthly competitions will have ended. Religious labels will no longer matter. What will matter is whether we sincerely sought to know God, to obey His guidance, and to encourage what is right throughout our lives.

If our greatest desire is to please God, what kind of life should we strive to live?

Section 7. Encouraging What Is Right and Forbidding What Is Wrong

Quran 3:104 Let there arise from among you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones who will attain success.

Among the many commandments found in the scriptures, few are more important to the health of a family, a community, or a nation than God's command to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong. This command is not directed only to religious leaders. It is a responsibility shared by every believer who sincerely desires to please God.

Notice that the verse begins with an invitation:

Let there arise from among you a band of people inviting to all that is good

God's command does not begin with condemnation. It begins by calling people toward what is good. Before confronting what is wrong, believers are first called to become examples of righteousness themselves, inviting others by both their words and their conduct to live according to God's guidance.

To encourage what is right means more than simply approving good behavior. It means actively promoting righteousness, justice, honesty, compassion, humility, and every quality that draws people closer to God. Righteousness grows strongest where it is encouraged, supported, and practiced together.

Likewise, to forbid what is wrong is not merely to criticize or condemn. It is to lovingly and courageously oppose those actions that God has declared harmful to individuals, families, and society. Sin is never condemned because God wishes to deprive humanity of happiness. It is condemned because it destroys the very people God created to flourish.

When believers faithfully encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong, they become instruments through which God strengthens their communities. They help create an environment in which righteousness is honored, wrongdoing is challenged, and future generations are given a clearer example of how God desires people to live.

For this reason, the command to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong is not simply about correcting individuals. It is about preserving the moral health of an entire community. A society that encourages righteousness naturally becomes stronger. A society that celebrates what God has forbidden gradually weakens itself from within.

Yet this responsibility must always be carried out with wisdom, humility, patience, and compassion. The goal is never to humiliate people or elevate ourselves above them. Every believer is a sinner in need of God's mercy. We encourage what is right because we love both God and our neighbor. We forbid what is wrong because we desire what is best for one another in this life and the life to come.

Throughout history, every righteous society has depended upon people who were willing to stand for what is right, even when it was unpopular. Likewise, every society that abandoned righteousness eventually suffered the consequences of allowing evil to go unchallenged. God calls believers not merely to avoid wrongdoing themselves but also to become examples that encourage others toward righteousness.

The command to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong is therefore not a burden but a blessing. It gives believers the opportunity to participate in God's work of building righteous families, righteous communities, and a world that better reflects His justice, mercy, and truth.

If encouraging what is right strengthens a community, what happens when a society begins encouraging what is wrong instead?

Section 8. The Purification of Society

Quran 13:17 He sends down water from the sky, and the valleys flow according to their measure. The torrent carries along rising foam. Likewise, from that which they melt in the fire to make ornaments and tools comes a scum similar to it. Thus God presents the examples of truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, being of no benefit. But what benefits mankind remains upon the earth. Thus does God set forth parables.

God often teaches profound truths through simple pictures taken from everyday life. Throughout the scriptures He uses parables to help people understand spiritual realities that might otherwise be difficult to grasp. This parable is one of the most remarkable because it reveals how truth ultimately triumphs over falsehood and how God purifies both individuals and societies.

The parable presents two familiar scenes. In the first, rain falls from the sky, filling the valleys according to their capacity. As the water flows, foam rises to the surface and is carried away by the current, while the life-giving water continues its journey. In the second, metal is heated in a furnace to produce ornaments and useful tools. As the metal is refined, impurities rise to the surface as scum and are removed, leaving behind the pure metal that is useful.

Although these scenes describe different processes, they teach the same lesson. In both cases, what is pure and beneficial remains, while what is worthless separates itself and is eventually removed.

God concludes the parable by saying:

**As for the foam, it vanishes, being of no benefit. But what
benefits mankind remains upon the earth**

This is one of the great principles by which God governs His
creation.

Truth endures.

Falsehood does not.

Righteousness benefits mankind.

Evil ultimately destroys itself.

The previous section explained God's command to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong. This parable now explains what begins to happen when believers faithfully obey that command.

As righteousness is encouraged, it grows stronger. As wrongdoing is challenged, those who refuse to abandon it often separate themselves from those who are committed to God's guidance. Just as impurities rise from molten metal and foam separates from flowing water, God begins a process of purification.

This purification is not merely individual. It also affects families, congregations, neighborhoods, communities, and eventually entire societies. Wherever people sincerely commit themselves to righteousness, truth becomes stronger, trust increases, justice is valued, and the influence of evil begins to diminish.

This does not mean that believers themselves become perfect. Every believer remains dependent upon God's mercy and continues striving for righteousness. Rather, it means that a community committed to God's guidance creates an environment where righteousness is honored, repentance is welcomed, and persistent evil is no longer celebrated or protected.

God does not ask His servants to purify the world by their own power. Their responsibility is to invite people to what is good, encourage what is right, and forbid what is wrong. The work of purification ultimately belongs to God. Just as no craftsman commands the impurities to rise from molten metal, believers cannot change hearts by force. They faithfully obey God's guidance and trust Him to bring about the results according to His wisdom and His timing.

This process requires patience. Just as metal is not purified instantly and rivers do not carry away all foam in a single moment, societies are not transformed overnight. God's work often unfolds gradually.

Yet His promise remains unchanged:

What benefits mankind will remain, while falsehood and corruption ultimately pass away

This parable therefore gives believers both hope and responsibility. Hope, because God has promised that truth will endure. Responsibility, because He calls His people to become instruments through which righteousness is encouraged and His guidance is made known.

The question is not whether God is able to purify society. The question is whether His people are willing to begin by purifying themselves and faithfully carrying out the responsibility He has entrusted to them.

If God purifies what is good from what is evil, then what is the true nature of evil itself?

Section 9. The Nature of Evil

Quran 2:168 O mankind, eat from whatever is lawful and good upon the earth and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.

Before we can understand righteousness, we must understand its opposite. Just as light is more easily recognized when contrasted with darkness, the goodness of God's guidance becomes clearer when we understand the nature of evil.

Many people think of evil only as acts of violence, cruelty, or great injustice. While these are certainly forms of evil, the scriptures present a much broader understanding.

Evil begins long before an action is committed. It begins whenever a person knowingly turns away from God's guidance and chooses a path that leads away from righteousness.

For this reason, evil is not merely something people do; it is a direction they choose.

God created human beings with the potential to rise to the highest levels of righteousness or to fall into the deepest moral corruption. Every person has been given the ability to choose between good and evil. What determines the direction of our lives is not simply what we believe, but whether we continually submit ourselves to God's guidance.

God's commandments are not restrictions designed to limit human freedom. They are safeguards designed to protect us from becoming the very opposite of what He created us to be. They preserve our character, strengthen our communities, and keep us from descending into patterns of behavior that ultimately destroy both ourselves and others.

For this reason, the previous section emphasized God's command to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong. One of the greatest blessings righteous people can give one another is the loving courage to prevent one another from drifting away from God's guidance. Good people help one another remain on the path of righteousness. Left without correction, however, human beings often continue down a path that becomes increasingly destructive.

Evil rarely appears all at once. It usually develops gradually. Every act of dishonesty, injustice, hatred, oppression, immorality, or corruption begins with a decision to ignore what God has declared to be right. When such behavior goes unchallenged and uncorrected, it often becomes easier to repeat.

Over time, repeated wrongdoing can harden the heart until evil begins to seem normal, acceptable, or even desirable.

One of evil's greatest deceptions is that it rarely presents itself as evil. Wrongdoing often appears attractive, reasonable, profitable, or even compassionate. Throughout history, people have justified injustice in the name of freedom, violence in the name of peace, pride in the name of honor, and immorality in the name of progress. Evil frequently disguises itself with appealing words while leading people away from God's guidance.

For this reason, believers are commanded to measure every idea, every practice, and every desire against the guidance God has revealed rather than against the changing opinions of society. Human standards change from generation to generation, but God's standard of righteousness remains constant.

This does not mean that every mistake makes a person evil. Every human being sins, falls short, and stands in need of God's mercy. The difference lies in the condition of the heart. The sincere believer recognizes wrongdoing, repents, and strives to return to God's guidance. Evil becomes established when people knowingly defend, promote, or persist in what God has declared to be wrong while refusing correction.

This is why repentance is one of God's greatest gifts. It allows a person to turn away from evil before it takes deeper root. No one is beyond God's mercy who sincerely seeks His forgiveness and desires to change.

Understanding the nature of evil also protects believers from another danger: seeing evil only in others. It is easy to recognize the faults of our neighbors while overlooking our own. Yet God's guidance calls every believer first to examine himself or herself with honesty and humility. The struggle against evil begins within the human heart before it is ever fought in society.

When societies misunderstand freedom as the right for every person to do whatever they please without moral accountability, they unintentionally allow evil to grow. Freedom without righteousness does not produce peace; it produces moral confusion. A society remains healthy not because wrongdoing is ignored, but because its people lovingly encourage what is right and refuse to accept what God has declared to be wrong.

Ultimately, evil is destructive because it separates people from the One who created them. It damages individuals, weakens families, corrupts communities, and leads nations away from justice and righteousness. What appears beneficial for a moment often produces lasting harm.

For this reason, believers are called not only to recognize evil but also to reject it, repent of it, and encourage one another toward what is right. Only then can God's work of purification continue within individuals and throughout society.

If evil opposes God's purpose for mankind, why does God allow Satan to continue influencing the world?

Section 10. Satanic Freedom

Quran 7:16–17 He said, ‘Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them, from their right and from their left, and You will not find most of them grateful.

After understanding the nature of evil, another important question naturally follows:

If Satan is the enemy of mankind, why does God allow him to continue influencing the world?

This question has challenged believers for centuries. If God possesses all power, why not simply destroy Satan and remove evil from the earth?

The answer begins with understanding the purpose for which God created human beings

As we saw earlier in this book, life is a test. A test requires genuine choice. Without the freedom to choose between obedience and disobedience, righteousness would have little meaning. Love for God could not be sincere if it were impossible to reject Him. Faithfulness has value precisely because human beings possess the freedom to choose it.

For this reason, God permitted Satan to continue after his rebellion. His continued existence does not represent a limitation of God’s power but the wisdom of God’s purpose.

Satan became part of the test through which every human being demonstrates whether they will follow God's guidance or their own desires.

This does not mean that Satan possesses unlimited power. On the contrary, the scriptures consistently teach that his influence is limited. He cannot force anyone to disobey God. He can tempt, deceive, and encourage evil, but every individual remains responsible for the choices they make.

Satan's greatest weapon is not power but deception

From the beginning, he has sought to make evil appear attractive and righteousness appear burdensome. He whispers that disobedience brings freedom while obedience brings restriction. He encourages pride over humility, selfishness over compassion, and personal desire over God's guidance.

Perhaps one of Satan's greatest deceptions in our own time is convincing people that freedom means living without moral boundaries. Many have come to believe that no one should challenge another person's behavior, even when it openly violates God's guidance. As a result, people often remain silent while wrongdoing grows stronger around them.

Yet true freedom is not the absence of moral responsibility. True freedom is the ability to choose what is right. A person enslaved by pride, hatred, greed, lust, or any other sinful desire is not truly free, regardless of how many choices they appear to possess. Freedom reaches its highest expression when people willingly submit themselves to God's guidance.

This is why God commands believers to encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong. Satan seeks to remove moral boundaries, while God establishes them for our protection. Satan encourages people to tolerate what destroys them.

God calls His servants to lovingly guide one another toward righteousness.

Throughout history, Satan has used many different methods, but his objective has never changed: to separate human beings from their Creator. Sometimes he appeals to fear. At other times he appeals to pride, pleasure, wealth, power, or religious arrogance. His methods change, but his purpose remains the same.

Yet believers need not fear Satan as though he possesses authority equal to God's. Satan remains subject to God's permission and God's final judgment. His time is limited, his influence is temporary, and his defeat is certain. God has already provided mankind with the guidance needed to recognize Satan's deception and resist it.

For this reason, the believer's attention should remain focused not upon Satan but upon God. Those who continually seek God's guidance, repent when they fall, encourage what is right, and forbid what is wrong need not live in fear. Their confidence rests not in their own strength but in the mercy, guidance, and protection of God.

The existence of Satan reminds us that every day presents another choice. Will we follow the One who created us, or the one who seeks to lead us away from Him? That decision belongs to each individual, and upon it rests both the direction of this life and the destiny of the next.

If this life is a test between two paths, what has God prepared for those who faithfully choose His guidance?

Section 11. What Is Heaven?

Quran 3:133 And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who are mindful of God.

From the beginning of this chapter, we have been climbing a stairway of understanding. Each section has built upon the one before it, leading us from the purpose of religion to personal responsibility, the pursuit of understanding, the race to please God, the encouragement of righteousness, the purification of society, the nature of evil, and the purpose of Satan's freedom.

All of these questions ultimately lead to one destination.

What has God prepared for those who sincerely seek Him?

The scriptures answer with a promise that has inspired Believers throughout history.

God has prepared Paradise.

Belief in God alone is not enough to complete the believer's hope. God also calls us to believe in His promise of the Last Day, the resurrection, the reward of Paradise for the righteous, and the punishment of Hell for those who knowingly reject His guidance. Faith is not only believing that God exists; it is trusting that every promise He has made will one day be fulfilled.

Many people think of Heaven primarily as a place of beauty, peace, and everlasting happiness. While the scriptures certainly describe it in these ways, Heaven is much more than a reward for enduring life's hardships.

It is the fulfillment of the purpose for which God created mankind.

From the beginning, God created human beings with the ability to know Him, worship Him, and freely choose righteousness. Life in this world is temporary. It is the place where that choice is made. Heaven is the everlasting home prepared for those who willingly choose to seek God's guidance and live according to it.

For this reason, Heaven should never be understood apart from God Himself. The greatest blessing of Paradise is not merely its beauty or its pleasures but the complete fulfillment of living in the presence of the One who created us. Every joy described in the scriptures points beyond itself to the greater reality that those who enter Paradise have attained the pleasure of God.

However, I believe many people have misunderstood the nature of the Paradise God promises. Popular culture often portrays Heaven as an existence among clouds, where people become spirits floating in an unearthly world. While such images have become familiar, they are very different from the descriptions found in the Quran.

The Paradise described throughout the Quran is presented as a real and tangible creation prepared by God for the righteous. God speaks of gardens beneath which rivers flow, beautiful homes, shade, fruit, fine clothing, companionship, families reunited, peace, security, and everlasting joy. These descriptions point to a real existence prepared for real people, not merely a symbolic or disembodied existence.

I believe this understanding is important because our understanding of the destination influences our desire to reach it. If people picture Heaven only as a vague spiritual existence, they may struggle to understand why God repeatedly calls believers to race toward righteousness. But when we understand Paradise as the perfected life God has prepared for those who love Him,

His promise becomes both meaningful and deeply motivating.

The promise of Heaven also gives meaning to the struggles of this life. Every temptation resisted, every act of righteousness, every sincere prayer, every sacrifice made for the sake of truth, and every effort to encourage what is right becomes part of a journey whose destination extends beyond this temporary world.

This hope changes the way believers live. If this life were all that existed, many would naturally seek wealth, power, comfort, or recognition above all else. But those who believe God's promise understand that the greatest success is not measured by what is gained in this world but by what is prepared in the next.

Some may ask, "If God intends to give His righteous servants eternal life, why does He not simply give it to us now?"

The answer lies in the purpose of this present life. If every human being lived forever before choosing whether to obey or disobey God, the righteous would spend eternity living alongside those who continually choose evil. Heaven itself would lose the peace and righteousness that make it Paradise.

This present life is therefore a time of testing. Here every person is given the freedom to choose whether to follow God's guidance or reject it. Only after that choice has been made does God separate the righteous from the wicked and grant eternal life to those who sincerely sought Him.

Heaven therefore gives purpose to every step we have climbed throughout this chapter. We sought understanding because we desire to know God. We accepted personal responsibility because we know we will stand before Him. We encouraged what is right because righteousness pleases Him. We resisted evil because it separates us from Him. We rejected Satan's deception because we trust God's promise more than temporary pleasures.

Yet the promise of Heaven should never produce pride. No person earns Paradise through his own goodness. Every believer depends upon God's mercy, forgiveness, and grace. We strive to obey Him not because we deserve His reward but because we love Him, trust Him, and hope in His mercy.

This is why true religion is so important. Religion is not merely a collection of traditions, ceremonies, or religious labels. It is God's guidance for those who sincerely seek Him. It teaches us how to live, how to distinguish truth from falsehood, how to encourage righteousness, how to resist evil, and how to prepare ourselves for the eternal life that God has promised.

As we conclude this first chapter, we have not reached the end of our journey but its foundation. The principles introduced here provide the framework for everything that follows. Each remaining chapter will examine one or more of these principles in greater depth, showing how they are lived out in the lives of God's servants and how they continue to guide those who sincerely seek Him today.

We begin that journey with one of the greatest examples of faith in all of Scripture—Abraham. His life demonstrates what it means to seek God through understanding, to reject inherited falsehood, to accept personal responsibility, and to place obedience to God above every earthly attachment. In many ways, Abraham's life is the living example of the principles introduced in this chapter.

May God grant us the wisdom to understand His guidance, the humility to accept His truth, the courage to live according to His commandments, and, by His mercy and grace, make us among those who enter the Paradise He has prepared for the righteous.

Chapter 2

Abraham, The Father of Religion

Returning to the Faith That Unites

Section 1. Why Abraham?

Quran 3:95 Say: God speaks the Truth: follow the religion of Abraham, the upright in faith; he was not among those who associated partners with God.

At the close of the previous chapter, we learned that true religion is God's guidance for those who sincerely seek Him. We discovered that its purpose is to lead mankind to righteousness, to unite people under the worship of one God, and to prepare them for the eternal life that God has promised. This naturally raises an important question, the importance of critical examination in a world rift with religious divisions.

If this is true religion, where should we look to understand it in its purest form?

Many people would expect the answer to be Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad. Yet throughout the Quran, God repeatedly points us to someone who lived before them all.

He points us to Abraham.

This surprises many people because Abraham is usually remembered simply as one of history's great prophets. Yet the Quran presents him as much more than that. Abraham is described as an example for all mankind, a man who sincerely sought God, rejected idolatry, submitted himself completely to his Creator, and became the father of all who worship the one true God.

For many years I searched for a simple way to explain Abraham's unique place in God's plan. The illustration that helped me most came from something familiar to almost everyone who uses a computer.

When a computer becomes infected with viruses or corrupted by harmful changes, one of the most useful tools available is System Restore. Rather than creating a new computer, System Restore returns it to an earlier point before the corruption occurred. It restores the computer to the condition it was intended to have.

I believe Abraham serves a similar purpose in God's plan for mankind.

Throughout history, religion became burdened with divisions, traditions, misunderstandings, and human interpretations. People identified themselves by different religious labels, formed competing sects, and often placed inherited traditions above the sincere search for God's truth.

Abraham represents religion before those divisions existed. He sought God before there were Jews, Christians, Muslims, denominations, sects, or schools of religious thought. His example reminds us that true religion begins not with inherited labels but with sincerely seeking, understanding, and submitting to God.

For this reason, I think of Abraham as God's "System Restore" for religion. When mankind becomes confused by division and human tradition, God calls us back to the example of Abraham—not to begin something new, but to restore our understanding of what true religion was always meant to be.

This does not mean that history stopped with Abraham. God continued to send prophets and reveal scriptures, each confirming the same essential message: worship God alone, live righteously, and prepare for the Day when every soul will return to Him.

Abraham therefore stands at the beginning of a continuous chain of divine guidance rather than at the beginning of a new religion.

If God repeatedly calls believers to return to Abraham, then another question naturally follows.

What exactly was the religion of Abraham? That question leads us to the next section.

Section 2. The Religion of Abraham

Quran 2:135 They say: ‘Become Jews or Christians if you would be guided.’ Say: ‘No! Rather, we follow the religion of Abraham, the upright in faith. He was not among those who associated partners with God.

The previous section explained why Abraham occupies such an important place in God’s plan for mankind. God repeatedly calls believers to return to Abraham because he represents true religion before it became divided by human traditions and religious labels. This naturally raises another question:

What was the religion of Abraham?

Many people assume that Abraham belonged to one of the religions that exist today. Yet history makes this impossible. Abraham lived centuries before Judaism was established through Moses, centuries before Christianity through Jesus, and centuries before the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad.

If Abraham was neither Jew, Christian, nor Muslim in the historical sense, then what religion did he follow?

The Quran gives a remarkably simple answer.

He submitted himself completely to God

Abraham’s religion was not built upon a religious label. It was built upon faith in one God, sincere obedience to His guidance, and a life devoted to righteousness. His religion was the religion of submission to the Creator.

This is why the Quran repeatedly commands believers to follow the religion of Abraham rather than presenting faith as something entirely new.

This is one of the most remarkable themes found throughout the Quran. The message is never, “Follow the religion of Muhammad.” Rather, God repeatedly says:

Follow the religion of Abraham

This does not diminish the role of Prophet Muhammad. On the contrary, it explains his mission. Muhammad was sent not to establish a new religion but to restore people to the same religion preached by Abraham and all the prophets before him.

Seen from this perspective, the Quran does not introduce a different path to God. It confirms and clarifies the path that faithful believers had always been called to follow.

This understanding changes the way we think about religion itself.

If Abraham’s religion came before the divisions of history, then true religion cannot ultimately be defined by denominational names, cultural traditions, or inherited identities. It must instead be defined by the relationship Abraham himself had with God—a relationship built upon faith, understanding, obedience, and righteousness.

For this reason, Abraham belongs to far more than one nation or one religious community. He stands as an example for every sincere believer who desires to know God and submit to His guidance.

The more we examine Abraham’s life, the more we discover that his greatest characteristic was not simply belief in God but his willingness to seek understanding and obey God’s guidance wherever it led.

He did not inherit his faith from the world around him. He searched for truth, recognized it, and devoted his life to following it.

That is why Abraham remains the father of religion. Not because he founded a new religion. But because he faithfully lived the religion that God intended from the beginning.

Yet this raises another important question. If God revealed one religion through Abraham, why are there so many religions and divisions among those who claim to follow the same God?

That question leads us to the next section.

Section 3. One God, One Religion

Quran 23:52–53 Surely this religion of yours is one religion, and I am your Lord, so fear Me. But they divided their religion among themselves into sects, each group rejoicing in what it has.

If Abraham followed one God and one religion, another question naturally arises.

Why are there so many religions today?

This question has puzzled sincere believers for centuries. If there is only one Creator, why do those who claim to worship Him remain divided into so many religions, denominations, sects, and schools of thought? The Quran gives a straightforward answer. God did not create the divisions. People did.

Throughout history, God sent prophets to different nations, but their essential message remained the same: worship God alone, live righteously, and prepare for the Day when every soul will return to Him. Although the prophets lived in different times

and spoke to different people, they did not establish competing religions. They called mankind to the same fundamental relationship with the same Creator.

Over time, however, people began identifying themselves by names, traditions, cultures, and leaders. Religious communities gradually divided into groups, and those divisions often became more important than the common faith they originally shared.

This pattern can be seen throughout history. Judaism developed various schools of thought. Christianity became divided into numerous denominations. Islam likewise developed Sunni, Shia, Sufi, and other traditions. Yet all of these groups look back to Abraham as a central figure in their religious heritage.

This raises an important question.

If Abraham lived before these divisions existed, which of these divisions belonged to him?

The answer is obvious.

None of them.

Abraham did not identify himself by a denomination, a sect, or a religious label created by later generations. His identity was found in his relationship with God.

This is one of the most important lessons Abraham teaches us.

God judges people by their faith, righteousness, and obedience—not by the names they give themselves. Religious labels may help describe history, culture, or communities, but they do not determine a person's standing before God. That responsibility belongs to each individual.

For this reason, the sincere believer must always be willing to place God's guidance above inherited traditions, personal preferences, or loyalty to any religious group. Whenever human loyalties conflict with God's guidance, Abraham's example reminds us where our highest loyalty must remain.

Recognizing this truth does not require us to reject people from different religious backgrounds. On the contrary, it encourages us to see them first as fellow human beings created by the same God. Instead of asking, “What religion do you belong to?” Perhaps we should first ask, “Are we both sincerely seeking the truth that God has revealed?”

When believers begin with that question, many barriers that divide people begin to disappear. We discover that our greatest unity is not found in our religious labels but in our common desire to know God and live according to His guidance.

Yet one question still remains.

How did Abraham come to know the one true God when nearly everyone around him worshipped idols?

The answer reveals one of the greatest examples of seeking God through understanding found anywhere in Scripture.

That is the subject of the next section.

Section 4. Abraham’s Search for God

Quran 6:75–79 So also did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be among those who possess certainty.

One of the greatest reasons Abraham is remembered throughout history is not simply because he believed in God, but because he sincerely searched for Him.

Abraham was not content to inherit the beliefs of the people around him. He wanted to know the truth for himself. Surrounded by a society devoted to idols and false gods, he refused to accept

popular opinion as the measure of truth. Instead, he observed, questioned, reasoned, and reflected upon the world around him.

The Quran describes this remarkable search through the familiar account of Abraham observing a star, then the moon, and finally the sun. Each appeared magnificent in its own way. Yet each eventually disappeared beneath the horizon. Each followed an appointed course that it could neither change nor escape.

For many people, this story simply teaches that Abraham rejected the worship of the heavenly bodies. While that is certainly true, I believe it teaches an even deeper lesson.

Abraham was discovering one of the greatest principles in all of creation.

Everything in creation obeys laws

The stars follow fixed paths. The moon moves according to its appointed course. The sun rises and sets according to laws established by its Creator. Every planet, every galaxy, every force of nature, and every living thing functions according to laws that it did not create and cannot change.

From these observations, Abraham reached a profound conclusion.

Anything that obeys laws cannot be the One who created those laws.

The Creator must always be greater than His creation

The One who established the laws governing the universe cannot Himself be merely another part of that universe. Creation points beyond itself to the Creator. Every law points to the Lawgiver. Every design points to the Designer.

Every act of obedience within creation bears witness to the One who commands it

In this way, Abraham discovered what I believe can be called the science of creation. He learned that creation itself testifies to its Creator. The universe is not random or self-governing. It reveals order, purpose, intelligence, and design. Those qualities point beyond creation to the One who brought it into existence.

Abraham's search was therefore much more than a search for an object worthy of worship. It was a search for the Creator behind creation itself. He was not satisfied merely knowing that God exists. He wanted to understand why only God deserves worship.

This is the same journey we began in Chapter One. We asked, What is religion? We asked why God created mankind, why people inherit religion, and why believers must seek understanding. Abraham's life now demonstrates those same principles. He did not begin with inherited conclusions. He began by asking questions, carefully examining the evidence before him, and allowing truth to guide him wherever it led.

There is another lesson that should not be overlooked. Abraham's search was marked by humility. He was not looking for evidence to support his own opinions. He was looking for the truth. There is a profound difference between defending what we already believe and sincerely seeking God's guidance. One protects the ego; the other transforms the heart.

For this reason, Abraham remains one of history's greatest examples of seeking God through understanding. He was willing to leave behind every belief that could not withstand careful examination. His loyalty was never to tradition, popular opinion, or even family expectations. His loyalty was to God alone.

Every sincere believer is called to follow that same example. God has given us minds to think, eyes to observe, and hearts to seek understanding. Like Abraham, we honor God not by refusing to ask questions but by asking them with humility and a sincere desire to know His truth.

Once Abraham understood that only the Creator deserves worship, another question confronted him.

If the idols worshipped by his people were themselves part of creation and subject to God's laws, why were people worshipping them instead of the One who created them?

That question led Abraham to one of the most courageous acts of his life.

It is the subject of the next section.

Section 5. Abraham and the Broken Idols

Quran 21:57–58 And by God, I will surely devise a plan against your idols after you have turned and gone away. So he reduced them to pieces, except for the largest of them, that they might return to it.

Understanding the truth is only the beginning of faith

Once Abraham recognized that God alone is worthy of worship, he faced another decision.

What should a believer do after discovering the truth?

Many people imagine that faith is something private, existing only in the heart. Abraham's life teaches something more. Genuine faith transforms the way a person lives.

Once we recognize the truth, we become responsible for living according to it.

Abraham understood that the idols surrounding him were not merely harmless objects. They represented ideas that had led people away from the worship of the one true God. These idols possessed no life, no power, and no authority. They could neither hear prayers nor answer them. Yet entire communities had devoted themselves to serving what they themselves had created.

Rather than responding with anger or violence against the people, Abraham chose to expose the weakness of the idols themselves. He broke them. Leaving only the largest idol standing, he placed the axe upon it. When the people returned and demanded to know who had destroyed their gods, Abraham answered in a way that forced them to think.

Ask the biggest one, if it can speak

For a brief moment, the people recognized the contradiction in their own beliefs. They admitted that the idols could neither speak nor defend themselves. Abraham had not destroyed their gods. He had destroyed the illusion that they were gods. This account teaches an important principle that extends far beyond ancient idols of stone and wood. Every generation has its idols.

Some worship wealth.

Some worship power.

Some worship political ideologies.

Some worship celebrities.

Some worship pleasure.

Others even worship their own opinions.

**Anything that takes the place that belongs to God becomes
an idol of the heart**

Abraham teaches us that the greatest battle against idolatry is not fought with hammers but with truth. Falsehood loses its power when people honestly examine it. Many beliefs continue only because they have never been questioned. Once exposed to careful examination, they often collapse under the weight of their own contradictions.

This is why Abraham's actions were so important. He did not simply condemn idolatry. He invited people to think. His purpose was not to humiliate them but to awaken them. This same principle has guided the writing of this book.

The purpose of asking difficult questions is never to attack sincere believers. It is to encourage the careful examination that leads to understanding. Truth has nothing to fear from honest questions. If our understanding is correct, careful examination will strengthen it. If our understanding is incomplete, sincere examination allows us to grow closer to God's truth. There is another lesson that should not be overlooked.

Abraham understood that encouraging what is right sometimes requires confronting what is wrong. Love for people does not mean remaining silent while they move farther away from God. Genuine compassion seeks to guide people toward truth, even when that truth is difficult to hear.

Yet Abraham's courage also came at a cost. Challenging falsehood rarely receives applause from those who benefit from it. Throughout history, those who have called people back to God's guidance have often faced rejection, ridicule, and persecution.

Abraham accepted that cost because pleasing God was more important than pleasing the crowd.

His example reminds every believer that understanding the truth brings responsibility. Once we know what is right, we are called not only to believe it but also to live it with wisdom, humility, and courage.

But Abraham's greatest test was still to come. Breaking idols was easier than surrendering what he loved most.

Would Abraham remain faithful when God asked him to sacrifice the person dearest to his heart? That question leads us to the next section.

Section 6. Abraham's Greatest Test

Quran 37:103–105 Then, when they had both submitted their wills to God, and Abraham had laid him prostrate upon his forehead, We called out to him, ‘O Abraham! You have already fulfilled the vision.’ Thus do We reward those who do good.

Throughout his search for God, Abraham demonstrated faith, courage, and a sincere desire to understand the truth. He rejected idolatry, challenged falsehood, and remained steadfast despite opposition. Yet none of these experiences became the greatest measure of his faith. God chose to test the love that Abraham held in his heart. Many people remember the account of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son and immediately conclude that God wanted Abraham to kill him but changed His mind at the last moment. As I have reflected upon these verses, however, I have come to a different understanding.

The words that have always caused me to pause are these:

O Abraham! You have already fulfilled the vision

This raises an important question. What did God mean when He said that Abraham had already fulfilled the vision? If the purpose of the vision had been the death of Abraham's son, then the vision had not yet been completed. Abraham had not carried out the sacrifice. Yet before his son was harmed, God declared that the vision had already been fulfilled.

For this reason, I believe the true purpose of the vision was never the death of Abraham's son. The vision was fulfilled the moment Abraham and his son had both completely submitted themselves to God's will. The test was not whether Abraham would take his son's life. The test was whether Abraham loved God more than the person he loved most. Every believer says that God comes first. But words alone do not reveal the condition of the heart. Only a test can do that. God already knew Abraham's heart. The test was not for God's benefit but for Abraham's and for every generation that would learn from his example. It revealed the depth of Abraham's faith and demonstrated what complete submission to God truly looks like. This also helps us understand what it means to love God.

Many people speak about loving God, yet God is beyond the full comprehension of the human mind. We cannot see Him with our eyes or fully understand His greatness. How then do we learn to love the One whom we cannot fully know?

We come to know God through His guidance and through the righteousness that reflects His character.

Whenever we recognize truth over falsehood, justice over injustice, mercy over cruelty, honesty over deception, and righteousness over corruption, we are recognizing the qualities that God commands and loves. To love God, therefore, is to love what He has declared to be right and to reject what He has declared to be wrong. Our loyalty to righteousness becomes the visible expression of our loyalty to the God who revealed it.

This understanding helps explain Abraham's test. God was not asking Abraham to prove his emotions. He was asking Abraham to demonstrate that his loyalty to God's righteousness and wisdom stood above every other loyalty in his life.

Abraham trusted that whatever God commanded was ultimately right, even when he did not yet understand the reason.

The lesson of Abraham becomes even clearer when compared with another great prophet. After the flood, Noah pleaded with God concerning his son. Although Noah loved him deeply, God reminded him that righteousness—not biological relationship—defines who truly belongs among God's people.

Quran 11:46 O Noah! He is not of your family. His conduct is unrighteous.

This remarkable exchange teaches that God's judgment is never based merely upon family relationships. It is based upon faith, righteousness, and obedience.

Abraham's test teaches the same truth from the opposite direction.

Where Noah learned that righteousness must come before family ties, Abraham demonstrated that his love for God and His righteousness stood above even the love he held for his own son.

Taken together, these two prophets teach one of the most important lessons in Scripture.

**God does not ask us to love our families less
He asks us to love righteousness more**

When righteousness governs our love, our families are blessed. But when family loyalty replaces loyalty to God, even the strongest earthly relationships cannot take the place of faithful obedience.

For this reason, Abraham became the father of religion. His greatness did not rest upon his ancestry, his wealth, or even the remarkable tests he endured.

It rested upon his unwavering willingness to place God and His righteousness above everything else. This is why believers throughout history have looked to Abraham as an example.

**He demonstrated that true religion is not merely knowing
the truth**

**It is loving God enough to live by His guidance, whatever
the cost**

Yet one important question still remains. If Abraham's faith became the example for all believers, who are the true children of Abraham today?

That question leads us to the next section.

Section 7. The Closest of Kin to Abraham

Quran 3:67–68 Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in faith, and bowed his will to God's, and he joined not gods with God. Without doubt, among men, the closest of kin to Abraham are those who followed him, as also this Prophet and those who believe; and God is the Protector of those who have faith.

Throughout history, countless people have claimed Abraham as their father.

The Jewish people honor him as their patriarch.

Christians honor him as the father of faith.

Muslims honor him as one of God's greatest prophets.

Yet the Quran asks a different question.

Who are the closest of kin to Abraham?

Many people assume the answer is determined by birth, nationality, or religious identity.

The Quran gives a different answer.

It first removes a common misunderstanding by declaring that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. Those religious identities developed centuries after Abraham lived. He could not have belonged to either one.

Instead, the Quran describes Abraham as a man who was true in faith, submitted his will completely to God, and devoted his life to righteousness.

Then the Quran makes one of its most remarkable statements.

It says that the closest of kin to Abraham are those who followed him, this Prophet, and those who believe.

This statement deserves careful attention.

The Quran does not present Prophet Muhammad as the founder of a new religion separate from Abraham's.

Instead, it identifies him as one who followed Abraham. His mission was not to replace Abraham's religion but to confirm, clarify, and restore it.

This is one of the central messages of the Quran. The religion preached by Muhammad is presented as the same religion practiced by Abraham—a religion of sincere faith, complete submission to God, righteousness, and devotion to the Creator alone.

This understanding changes the way we think about spiritual family. The closest of kin to Abraham are not determined merely by ancestry but by faith and conduct. God's family is not built upon bloodlines. It is built upon faith, righteousness, and obedience.

This is the same lesson we learned from Noah, when God declared that Noah's unrighteous son was not truly of his family because of his conduct.

It is the same lesson we learned from Abraham, whose greatest loyalty belonged to God above every earthly relationship.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently teaches that righteousness forms a stronger bond than biological descent.

This truth removes one of the greatest barriers that has divided believers throughout history. If Abraham belongs only to one nation or one religious community, then humanity remains divided.

But if Abraham belongs to everyone who sincerely follows his example, then he becomes the common father of all who seek God through understanding and submission to His guidance. This was always God's purpose.

Abraham's life was never intended to create another division. It was intended to become the meeting place where sincere believers could stand together before the one true God.

For this reason, I believe the greatest way to honor Abraham is not simply to admire him.

It is to imitate him.

Like Abraham, we are called to seek understanding rather than merely inherit tradition.

Like Abraham, we are called to examine our beliefs honestly.

Like Abraham, we are called to reject falsehood even when it is popular.

Like Abraham, we are called to place our loyalty to God above every other loyalty.

And like Abraham, we are called to submit ourselves completely to the One who created us.

When we do these things, we become among the closest of kin to Abraham—not because we claim his name, but because we share his faith, his righteousness, and his submission to God.

Yet one important question remains.

If the Quran repeatedly calls mankind to follow the religion of Abraham, how can we fully understand that religion today?

To answer that question, we must now examine the very book that repeatedly calls us back to Abraham.

The Quran presents itself not as a new religion, but as God's final confirmation and clarification of the religion of Abraham.

Understanding that book is therefore essential for anyone who sincerely desires to understand Abraham's religion.

That is the purpose of the next chapter:

Chapter Three — Understanding the Holy Quran

The Quran speaks of Abraham with the highest respect and repeatedly presents him as an example of sincere faith and complete submission to God. A few of these passages are included below so the reader may examine them directly.

Quran 2:130 And who turns away from the religion of Abraham, but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and rendered pure in this world: and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous.

Quran 3:95-97 Say: "God speaks the truth: follow the religion of Abraham the sane in faith; he was not of the pagans." The first House of worship appointed for men was that at Bakka, full of blessing and guidance for all kinds of beings. In it are signs manifest; for example, the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; pilgrimage to it is a duty man owes to God those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, God stands not in need of any of his creatures.

Quran 4:125 Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For God did take Abraham for a friend.

Quran 6:161 Say: "Verily my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight a religion of right the path trod by Abraham the true in faith, and he certainly joined not gods with his Lord."

Quran 16:120-122 Abraham was indeed a model devoutly obedient to God and true in faith, and he joined not gods with God: He showed his gratitude for the favors of God Who chose him and guided him to a straight way. And We gave him good in this world, and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous.

Chapter 3

Understanding the Holy Quran

Learning Directly from God

Section 1. Why Did God Reveal the Quran?

Quran 2:2 This is the Book; in it is guidance without doubt for those who are mindful of God.

At the close of the previous chapter, we discovered that the Quran repeatedly calls mankind to follow the religion of Abraham. We also learned that Prophet Muhammad is presented not as the founder of a new religion but as one who followed Abraham and called others back to the same path.

This naturally raises another important question.

Why did God reveal the Quran?

Many people believe the Quran was revealed simply to establish another religion or to replace those that came before it. Yet the Quran presents a different purpose. It presents itself as God's guidance for mankind.

Throughout history, God sent prophets to different nations, each calling people back to the worship of one God and to lives of righteousness. Although their circumstances differed, their essential message remained the same. The Quran declares that it confirms the truth that came before it, clarifies what people had misunderstood, and serves as God's final guidance for humanity.

For this reason, I do not believe the Quran should be viewed as the beginning of a new religion.

I believe it should be understood as God's final confirmation and clarification of the religion He revealed through Abraham and the prophets who followed him.

But understanding the Quran requires more than reading its words.

It requires entering into a personal journey of learning with God.

One of the most remarkable accounts in the Quran is the story of Adam. Before Adam was given responsibility on the earth, God taught him the nature of all things. Adam did not discover this knowledge through human reasoning alone. God Himself became his Teacher.

After teaching Adam, God instructed him to inform the angels of what he had learned. When Adam demonstrated the understanding God had given him, God commanded the angels to bow before Adam.

I do not believe this was an act of worship toward Adam. Worship belongs to God alone. Rather, I understand it as an acknowledgment of the knowledge and understanding that God Himself had placed within him.

Adam was honored because he had learned from God. I believe Adam's experience establishes a pattern that continues throughout the Quran.

Every believer begins the journey alone with God.

No one can believe for another person.

No one can understand for another person.

Each of us must personally seek God, personally learn from Him, and personally answer to Him.

When we open the Quran with humility, seeking understanding rather than merely information, we become students in God's classroom. The Quran is not merely a book of laws or religious rituals. It is God's method of teaching those who sincerely seek Him.

Step by step, He teaches us the nature of many things.

He teaches us the difference between truth and falsehood.

Between righteousness and evil.

Between justice and oppression.

Between sincere faith and empty tradition.

Between guidance and misguidance.

Like Adam, we are not expected merely to memorize information.

We are expected to understand

This is why I believe the Quran is unlike any other book. It is designed to educate the believer. Every chapter, every parable, every historical account, and every command contributes to a greater understanding of God, ourselves, and the world He has created.

In this sense, studying the Quran is much like attending the highest university imaginable.

God Himself becomes the Teacher.

The subject is life itself. The lessons concern the most important questions humanity can ask.

What is truth?

What is righteousness?

Why were we created?

How should we live?

What awaits us after death?

As believers continue this journey, their understanding grows one step at a time, much like climbing a stairway. Each lesson prepares them for the next until truths that once seemed difficult become clear.

I also believe that God does not intend for every believer to simply repeat another person's understanding.

According to my understanding of the Quran, God desires to develop the understanding of every sincere believer. He teaches each person according to His wisdom, granting each the light needed to walk the path He has prepared for them. No believer walks in another person's light. Each must walk in the light that God provides.

For this reason, I believe that no person's understanding—including my own—should replace another believer's responsibility to seek understanding directly from God.

Once God teaches us, however, He expects us to share what we have learned—not as people claiming to possess perfect knowledge, but as students sharing the understanding God has graciously given them.

Like Adam, we are not called to draw attention to ourselves.

We are called to point others toward the One who taught us.

The chapters that follow should therefore be understood in that spirit.

They are not presented as the final word on God's truth, nor as an understanding that others are required to accept.

They represent my understanding of what I believe God has taught me through my own journey of studying the Quran. Others who sincerely seek God may be led to see some things differently or may even be blessed to understand things beyond what I have seen.

If these pages accomplish anything, my hope is not that readers will adopt my understanding, but that they will begin or continue their own journey of learning with God.

This, I believe, is one of the greatest purposes for which God revealed the Quran.

Not merely to increase our knowledge.

But to transform our understanding so that we may become better servants of God and better guides for humanity.

Yet another question naturally follows.

If the Quran was revealed as guidance for mankind, why do so many people believe that it belongs only to one religious community?

That question leads us to the next section.

Section 2. Who Is the Quran For?

Quran 2:185 The month of Ramadan is that in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, clear proofs for guidance and the criterion between right and wrong.

Having seen why God revealed the Quran, another important question naturally follows.

Who was the Quran revealed for?

Many people assume that the Quran belongs only to Muslims. Some even believe that unless a person first accepts the religious label Muslim, the Quran has little to offer them.

I do not believe this is how the Quran presents itself.

The Quran repeatedly describes itself as guidance for mankind.

It speaks to human beings before it speaks to religious communities.

It invites every sincere seeker to reflect, to reason, and to understand God's guidance.

This is consistent with everything we have learned so far.

In the first chapter, we discovered that religion begins with the individual seeking God through understanding.

In the second chapter, we learned that Abraham became the father of religion before Judaism, Christianity, or Islam existed as historical communities.

Now the Quran continues that same message by addressing humanity itself.

God does not begin by asking people what religious label they wear.

He begins by asking whether they are willing to seek Him.

This brings us to an important distinction.

Many people think the words Islam and Muslim refer only to a particular religious community.

Yet the word Islam literally means submission or surrender to the will of God.

A Muslim, in its literal sense, is one who submits his or her will to God.

Before these words became associated with a particular religious community, they described a relationship between a human being and the Creator.

This is why the Quran describes Abraham as one who submitted himself completely to God.

His submission existed long before religious labels developed.

For this reason, I believe we should first understand these words in their original meaning before understanding them as historical labels.

God is not primarily concerned with what we call ourselves.

He is concerned with whether we sincerely seek Him, submit ourselves to His guidance, and desire to understand His will.

Throughout the Quran, God repeatedly calls people to believe, to think, to reflect, to remember, and to understand.

These invitations are not limited to one nation or one religious community.

They are extended to everyone willing to listen.

The Quran therefore presents itself as an invitation from God to every sincere seeker.

Each person must accept that invitation alone.

No one can seek God for another person.

No one can believe for another person.

No one can understand for another person.

No one can stand before God on another person's behalf.

Every believer must personally read, reflect, ask questions, and seek understanding.

Like Adam, each believer stands before God as a student.

God becomes the Teacher
The believer becomes the student
The Quran becomes the classroom

The purpose is not merely to gain information.

It is to gain understanding.

As that understanding grows, the believer begins to see life differently.

The world is no longer viewed merely through culture, tradition, politics, or inherited religious opinions.

It is increasingly viewed through the understanding that God develops within the believer.

I believe this is one of the greatest blessings God offers those who sincerely seek Him.

He does not simply give them a book.

He teaches them how to understand it.

According to my understanding of the Quran, God desires every sincere believer to grow in wisdom and understanding through their own relationship with Him. The understanding that develops within one believer is not meant to replace the responsibility of another believer to seek God personally.

For this reason, I hope readers will approach this book in the same way they approach the Quran itself—not accepting my conclusions because they are mine, nor rejecting them because they differ from what they have inherited, but examining them thoughtfully while continuing their own journey of learning with God.

If my understanding is correct, I thank God for teaching me.

If I have misunderstood something, I trust that God will continue teaching both me and those who sincerely seek Him. This is why I believe the Quran belongs to everyone who sincerely seeks God.

It was not revealed to create another exclusive religious community.

It was revealed as guidance for mankind, inviting every individual back to the worship of the one true God and to the righteousness He has always required. Yet another important question remains.

If the Quran was revealed for everyone, how should we approach it so that we understand it correctly rather than merely reading its words? That question leads us to the next section.

Section 3. How Should We Read the Quran?

Quran 38:29 This is a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, that they may reflect upon its verses, and that those of understanding may take heed.

If the Quran was revealed as guidance for all mankind, another important question naturally follows. How should we read it?

Many people approach the Quran as though its greatest purpose is to be recited. Others approach it primarily as a book of laws or as a collection of religious stories. While all of these have their place, I believe the Quran asks something much greater of its readers.

It asks us to understand.

Throughout the Quran, God repeatedly calls people to think, reflect, reason, remember, and seek understanding. These invitations appear again and again because God did not reveal His guidance merely to be repeated by the tongue.

He revealed it to transform the mind and the heart.

This should change the way every believer approaches the Quran.

We should not ask only, what does this verse say? We should also ask?

“Why did God reveal this verse?”

“What is He teaching?”

“What does this reveal about God?”

“What does this reveal about human nature?”

“How should this change the way I live?”

When we begin asking these questions, the Quran changes from a book we merely read into a Teacher from whom we learn. This is exactly what we saw in the story of Adam.

God did not simply give Adam information.

He taught him.

Learning requires more than reading words.

It requires observation.

Reflection.

Questions.

Humility.

Patience.

And a sincere desire to understand.

I believe God invites every believer to walk this same journey with Him.

Each time we open the Quran, we should imagine ourselves sitting before the greatest Teacher in existence.

Our purpose is not to defend what we already believe.

Our purpose is to learn what God desires to teach us.

This also means we should never be afraid to ask sincere questions.

Some people fear that questioning their understanding of religion shows weak faith.

I believe the opposite is often true.

A believer without questions is often a believer who has stopped learning.

Questions are not the enemy of faith.

They are often the doorway to greater understanding.

Abraham asked questions.

Moses asked questions.

The disciples of Jesus asked questions.

The prophets continually sought greater understanding from God.

Why should we imagine that our own journey requires fewer questions than theirs?

God does not condemn sincere questions that seek understanding.

He condemns arrogance that refuses to accept the answers.

As we learned in Chapter One:

Belief should never become the end of learning.

It should become the beginning.

Once we believe that God has spoken, our desire to understand His guidance should become even greater.

There is another principle that has guided my own study of the Quran.

I try to let the Quran explain itself whenever possible.

One verse often sheds light upon another.

A story introduced in one chapter may be explained more fully in another.

A principle mentioned briefly in one place may be developed elsewhere.

Rather than forcing my own ideas upon the text, I have found it far wiser to allow God's words to explain God's words.

Even then, I recognize that my understanding remains just that—my understanding.

I do not claim that every conclusion I have reached is beyond question.

I simply share what I believe God has taught me through years of studying the Quran, while recognizing that He may continue correcting my understanding as I continue to learn.

I also believe that God teaches every sincere believer personally.

He may lead another believer to see something I have overlooked.

He may deepen an understanding that is only beginning to grow within me.

Because God is the Teacher, no believer becomes the final authority over another believer's understanding.

We remain fellow students, each responsible for seeking God with sincerity and humility.

Understanding also grows gradually.

No one climbs a stairway by standing on the top step first.

Each step prepares us for the next.

The same is true of the Quran.
God does not reveal every lesson at once.
He teaches us patiently, one truth leading naturally to another,
until ideas that once seemed difficult become clear.
This is why humility is so important.
The purpose of reading the Quran is not to win arguments.
It is to become a better servant of God.
Knowledge without humility often produces pride.
Understanding joined with humility produces wisdom.
For this reason, I believe every believer should approach the
Quran with a humble prayer:
“O God, teach me what I do not know, correct what I have
misunderstood, and guide me to the truth that pleases You.”
That prayer prepares the heart far better than confidence in
our own opinions.
It also prepares us to listen—not merely to what others say
about God—but to what God may teach us through His Word.
As our understanding grows, another important question natu-
rally arises.
It also prepares us to listen—not merely to what others say
about God—but to what God may teach us through His Word.
The first part of this chapter has focused on the believer’s rela-
tionship with God as Teacher. Like Adam, each of us is invited
to learn directly from God through His guidance, growing in
understanding one step at a time.
But the story of Adam does not end with learning.
After God taught Adam the nature of all things, He instructed
him to declare that understanding before the angels. Adam spoke,
not because he possessed wisdom of his own, but because God
had first become his Teacher.

I believe this pattern continues for every sincere believer. God teaches us so that we may become better servants of Him and, when the opportunity arises, share the understanding He has graciously given us with others. We do so with humility, recognizing that our understanding remains incomplete and that God alone possesses perfect knowledge.

Everything that follows in this chapter should therefore be understood in that spirit. The remaining sections represent my understanding of what I believe God has taught me through years of studying the Holy Quran. I do not present these pages as the final interpretation of God's Word, but as the understanding I have received as a student in His classroom. My hope is not that readers will simply adopt my conclusions, but that they will continue their own journey of learning with God while carefully considering what I believe He has taught me.

With that understanding, I would like to begin with what I believe is one of the most misunderstood subjects in the Quran—the true meaning of submission to the will of God.

Section 4. Submission to the Will of God

Quran 14:4 We sent not a messenger except to teach in the language of his own people, to make things clear to them. Now God leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides those whom He pleases. He is exalted in power, full of wisdom.

In school, we learned that a word exists to represent a meaning. A meaning can exist without a word, but should a word exist without its true meaning? When a word is not clearly understood, people are free to attach their own interpretations to it, often leading to confusion and misunderstanding.

I believe the meaning behind a word is more important than the word itself. However, in the case of the words Islam and Muslim, it appears that those who inherited the Quran before us gradually placed greater importance on the words than on their meanings. Over time, this has obscured the message those words were intended to communicate.

When words become more important than their meanings, God's original message becomes more difficult to understand. The purpose of the Quran is to make God's guidance clear to humanity, and restoring the true meaning of these terms is part of preserving that clarity.

For example, if I asked one million people who are not part of the Islamic faith whether they had heard the words Muslim or Islam, I believe most would recognize them. However, if I asked those same people to define those words accurately, I doubt many could do so. The same result would likely occur if I asked another million people, and then another.

This reveals an important problem. Although many people recognize the words Islam and Muslim, they have not been taught their original meanings. Rather than understanding Islam as submission to God's will and a Muslim as one who submits to God, many view them simply as labels describing a particular religious group. This misunderstanding has obscured the universal message of the Holy Quran.

If people understood the deeper meaning of these words, many would discover that the Quran speaks to everyone who believes in God, regardless of religious label. Its message is not confined to one community but is addressed to all who believe in God alone, believe in the Last Day, and strive to live righteously. God's concern is not the name people call themselves but the sincerity of their faith and the righteousness of their lives.

To illustrate this, consider the following passages from the Quran:

Quran 2:62 Those who believe in the Quran, those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians—any who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteousness—shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Quran 2:112 Nay, whoever submits his whole self to God and is a doer of good will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Quran 10:37 This Quran is not such as can be produced by other than God; on the contrary, it is a confirmation of revelations that went before it and a fuller explanation of the Book wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of the Worlds.

In conclusion, the Quran teaches that submission to God's will is not the exclusive possession of any religious label but the calling of every person who sincerely seeks Him. Once the true meaning of submission is understood, another important question naturally follows: If the Quran is addressed to everyone who submits to God, can any one religion rightly claim ownership of it? The answer to that question reveals the universal purpose for which God revealed the Quran to humanity.

Section 5. Can One Religion Own the Quran

The Holy Quran is not a book meant to be monopolized by one group or religion. Its purpose transcends ownership or singular interpretation, aiming instead to reintroduce Abraham's faith and establish the principle of religious freedom. This universal approach invites all humanity to read, reflect, and decide for themselves the truth revealed by God.

The divisions seen today among the three major branches of Islam—Sunni, Shia, and Sufi—illustrate developments that arose after the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad rather than from the Quran itself. During Prophet Muhammad's life, these sects did not exist. They emerged over time through human interpretations shaped by historical events and differing perspectives. While these traditions have historical significance, they should not limit the universal message of the Quran. This serves as an important reminder that sectarianism can hinder both spiritual unity and a clearer understanding of God's guidance.

The Quran's universal principles challenge the idea that any single group possesses exclusive ownership of God's message. Instead, it invites every individual to engage with the Quran personally, encouraging reflection, understanding, and spiritual growth. When people approach God's revelation without the constraints of inherited sectarian traditions, they are better able to discover the truths that unite rather than divide.

Many people born into Sunni, Shia, or Sufi communities practice the faith they inherited without ever studying the Quran for themselves. The same pattern exists throughout the world, where individuals often inherit beliefs without personally examining whether those beliefs agree with God's revelation. The Quran continually calls people to seek righteousness, justice, and truth through sincere reflection rather than through blind acceptance.

Sadly, presenting the Quran as a book intended only for those who identify as Muslims often discourages others from reading it. Some people reject the Quran before opening its pages because they associate it with the actions or behavior of those who claim to represent it. In doing so, they may never discover that its message is addressed to all who sincerely seek God.

Moreover, the Quran repeatedly warns against creating divisions within religion. God's guidance is universal, calling believers to unite around righteousness rather than dividing themselves into competing religious identities.

The Quran invites every person to seek righteousness, compassion, and truth without barriers. Those who approach it with humility and an open heart can discover wisdom that transcends religious, cultural, and national boundaries.

In this sense, the Quran stands as God's message to all humanity rather than the possession of any one religious community. It is the revelation itself that deserves our complete attention, not the organizations or traditions that have grown around it. Understanding this also helps us understand the mission of the man through whom God chose to deliver His final revelation. Before examining the Quran's teachings more deeply, it is therefore important to understand the role of the Prophet Muhammad—not as the founder of a new religion, but as God's final messenger entrusted with restoring the faith of Abraham and delivering His revelation to the world.

Section 6. Prophet Muhammad

Most Muslims believe and teach that the Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet of God. Sunni Muslims teach that since the Prophet Muhammad is no longer here on earth, those who believe in the Holy Quran must follow the books of the Hadith and the Sunnah, which represent the recorded sayings and practices of the Prophet.

I also believe that Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet God would send, but not because of the Hadith or Sunnah. Instead, I believe the Holy Quran can guide anyone who believes in and obeys God without depending upon the Hadith or Sunnah written by men. The Quran provides believers with the same wisdom, understanding, and mission that God entrusted to His prophets: to proclaim His message faithfully to humanity.

A righteous believer who studies the Quran gains the authority to challenge wrongdoing, falsehood, and injustice through the knowledge contained within God's revelation. This is the power of the Quran. It equips every believer who sincerely seeks to serve God with the moral strength and purpose needed to uphold truth and righteousness.

I do not believe God expects everyone who worships Him and follows the Holy Quran to think exactly like the Prophet Muhammad. God gave each of us a mind for a reason, and I do not believe He intends believers to consult every detail of what Prophet Muhammad said or did in the Sunnah before making decisions about their own lives. While the Prophet's life provides an excellent example of faithfulness and obedience, God's intention is for every believer to develop the wisdom to think, judge, and apply the principles of the Quran personally.

When believers rely exclusively upon traditions or secondary writings without carefully reflecting upon the Quran itself, they risk allowing human interpretations to overshadow God's direct guidance. God's plan calls believers to grow both spiritually and intellectually through sincere study, reflection, and obedience.

The Quran repeatedly bears witness to this principle. Throughout its pages, God calls believers to reflect, reason, and use the minds He has given them to seek truth and justice. This is not a call to imitate every historical circumstance but to develop the discernment needed to apply God's guidance faithfully in every generation.

Rather than creating dependence upon human authority, the Quran calls believers into a direct relationship with God through His revelation. As believers study, reflect, and obey His guidance, they grow in wisdom, righteousness, and confidence to live according to His will.

In conclusion, the Prophet Muhammad fulfilled his mission by faithfully delivering God's final revelation to humanity. His greatness is found not in elevating himself above the other prophets but in his complete submission to God's will and his faithful transmission of the Quran. This naturally raises another important question: If Muhammad was one of God's messengers, how should believers understand his relationship to the prophets who came before him? The Quran answers this question by repeatedly commanding believers to make no distinction between God's messengers, reminding us that they all carried the same divine message and served the same Lord.

Section 7. Make No Distinctions!

Many Muslims today believe that to be a Muslim, one must consider Prophet Muhammad the best and highest of God's prophets, primarily because he was the last prophet. However, this belief finds no support in the Holy Quran, where God repeatedly instructs believers not to make distinctions between His prophets. This teaching emphasizes the equality of all prophets in delivering God's message to humanity. By insisting on the equality of all prophets, the Quran reinforces the unity of God's message throughout history.

During Prophet Muhammad's life, it was essential to clarify that he was a messenger of God and not divine himself. This reminder countered the Christian elevation of Jesus to divine status, reaffirming that Jesus, like all the other prophets, was a human being chosen by God. Likewise, emphasizing Muhammad's humanity preserved the purity of monotheism by ensuring that worship remained directed to God alone.

However, the continued emphasis on Muhammad as God's messenger after his death can unintentionally suggest a hierarchy among the prophets. This focus risks creating the very distinctions the Quran warns against, where certain messengers are elevated above others, drawing attention away from their shared mission of calling humanity to submit to God.

Should Adam be elevated because he was the first prophet? Should Abraham be considered superior because God made him the father of many nations? Should Moses be deemed greater because God spoke to him directly? Should Jesus be considered more significant because of his miraculous virgin birth? And finally, should Muhammad be regarded as the greatest simply because he was the last prophet?

The Quran reminds us that the prophets belong to one brotherhood, united in their mission to guide humanity toward submission to God. This consistent message calls believers to learn from the example of every prophet rather than elevating one above another. The real question for us today is whether we will trust inherited traditions or seek the truth directly from God's revelation.

The Quran encourages believers to engage personally with its message, using reason and understanding to reflect upon God's words. Rather than accepting inherited beliefs without examination, believers are called to seek truth sincerely and allow God's guidance to shape their understanding.

By trusting in God and seeking truth through personal reflection, believers can rise above traditions that divide and instead embrace the unity found in God's message.

The Quran's message is not passive but an active invitation to reflect, question, and seek understanding with sincerity. It encourages every believer to engage personally with God's revelation rather than relying solely upon the interpretations of others.

In conclusion, the Quran's insistence on the equality of all prophets reminds us that God's message has always been one message delivered through many messengers. Although the prophets lived in different times and circumstances, they all called humanity to worship the same Creator and to walk the same path of righteousness. When believers honor every messenger without distinction, they preserve the unity of God's revelation.

As I reflected on these verses, I came to understand that God's command to make no distinctions among His messengers is not simply about honoring the prophets equally. It is also God's protection against the divisions that arise whenever people elevate one messenger, one teacher, or one religious tradition

above another. Once believers begin making distinctions where God has commanded unity, they inevitably begin dividing His religion into competing sects, each convinced that it alone possesses the truth. It is for this reason that the Quran follows its call for unity with repeated warnings against division. The Quran bears Witness.

Quran 4:152 To those who believe in God and His messengers and make no distinction between any of the messengers, we shall soon give their due rewards; for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Quran 2:285 The messenger Muhammad believed in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each of them believes in God, His angels, His books, and His messengers. “We make no distinction,” they say, “between one and another of His messengers.” And they say: “We hear, and we obey. We seek Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the end of all journeys.”

Quran 3:84 Say: “We believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which their Sustainer has vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and all the other prophets: we make no distinction between any of them. And unto Him do we surrender ourselves.”

Quran 3:144 Muhammad is no more than a messenger: many were the messengers that passed away before him. If he died or was slain, would you turn back on your heels?

If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm would he do to God, but God, on the other hand, will swiftly reward those who serve Him with gratitude.

Section 8. God's Warning Against Division

Throughout my study of the Quran, I came to understand that one of God's clearest commands is that believers must not divide His religion into competing sects and factions. The message revealed to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad came from the same Creator and called humanity to the same foundation: submission to the will of God, righteousness, and justice. God reminds us in Quran 42:13:

“He has ordained for you the same religion as that which He enjoined on Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: that you should remain steadfast in religion and make no divisions therein.”

Yet the Quran also explains what humanity has done instead. Rather than preserving that unity, people divided themselves into competing religious groups, each convinced that it alone possessed the truth. As God says in Quran 23:53:

“But people have cut their unity into sects: each party rejoices in what they have.”

As I reflected on these verses, I began to see division not simply as a historical problem but as one of the greatest causes of humanity's suffering. When people place loyalty to a sect, denomination, political movement, tribe, or ideology above their loyalty to God, conflict inevitably follows. The Quran warns that God allows humanity to experience the consequences of these divisions as a reminder of the path they have abandoned. In Quran 6:65, He says:

“He has the power to send calamities on you from above and below or to cover you with confusion in party strife, giving you a taste of mutual vengeance each from the other. See how We explain the signs by various symbols that they may understand.”

As I looked at the world around me, I saw this warning reflected in the endless cycle of religious conflict, political polarization, ethnic hatred, and violence. The divisions that separate humanity become their own punishment as people inflict suffering upon one another. The Quran presents these conflicts not only as human tragedies but also as reminders of the consequences of abandoning God’s guidance.

The Quran calls believers to a different path. Rather than identifying themselves primarily by race, nationality, political affiliation, or religious denomination, believers are called to unite under God’s standards of righteousness and justice. Quran 49:13 declares:

“O humanity! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another, not to despise one another. Indeed, the most honored among you in the sight of God is the most righteous.”

This verse helped me understand that righteousness—not identity—is the measure by which God judges humanity. Righteousness is not permanent, nor is it inherited. Those who were righteous yesterday may choose an unrighteous path tomorrow. Because of this, believers cannot blindly defend any individual or group simply because they share the same religion, race, culture, or political beliefs. Their loyalty must remain with God’s justice above all else.

The Quran describes the best community as those who encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong.

In Quran 3:110, God says:

**You are the best community raised for humanity:
you enjoin good, forbid wrong, and believe in God.**

This understanding also changed the way I viewed conflict among believers. The Quran does not command believers to take sides based on personal loyalties. Instead, it commands them to pursue reconciliation and justice. In Quran 49:9, God instructs:

“If two groups of believers fight each other, make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses, fight against the transgressor until they submit to God’s rule. If they comply, reconcile them with justice and fairness. Indeed, God loves those who act justly.”

Even when justice requires resisting oppression, the goal is never revenge or the destruction of an opponent. The goal is the restoration of justice, reconciliation, and obedience to God.

As my understanding of the Quran continued to grow, I came to see that division itself is one of humanity’s greatest spiritual dangers. God did not call people to defend religious labels, sectarian identities, or political factions. He called them to defend righteousness, establish justice, encourage what is right, and forbid what is wrong. Whenever believers elevate their identities above God’s guidance, division follows. Whenever they return to His guidance, unity becomes possible.

This realization also taught me that returning to God’s guidance requires more than simply reading the Quran—it requires learning how God teaches through it. The Quran is not merely a collection of commands and historical accounts.

Throughout its pages, God instructs through clear verses, stories, allegories, and parables that invite the believer to reflect, reason, and seek understanding. As I continued my journey through the Quran, I began to see these allegories and parables as essential keys to understanding the deeper lessons that God intended for those who sincerely seek His guidance.

Section 9. Allegories and Parables

The Quran teaches that its verses can be either clear or allegorical. Clear verses provide explicit guidance, forming the foundation of faith and righteous living. Allegorical verses, on the other hand, require deeper understanding and are often misinterpreted by those with “a disease in their hearts,” who seek to twist their meanings for personal or ideological gain. True believers, however, focus on the clear verses for guidance, trusting that the more complex parts of the Quran hold meanings known only to God or to those specially blessed with wisdom.

This dual nature of Quranic verses reflects a profound approach to communication, combining accessible guidance with deeper layers of meaning for those willing to reflect. Rather than encouraging speculation, the Quran repeatedly calls believers to hold firmly to its clear teachings while approaching its allegories with humility and reverence.

Parables and metaphors in the Quran further illustrate God’s wisdom, using simple stories to convey profound truths. These parables invite reflection and provide moral clarity, allowing believers to understand spiritual realities through familiar experiences. They demonstrate that God teaches not only through direct commandments but also through examples that encourage thoughtful reflection and sincere understanding.

Throughout the Quran, historical events serve a similar purpose. They are not merely records of the past but living lessons that reveal God's guidance, man's recurring mistakes, and the consequences of obedience and disobedience. By reflecting on these accounts, believers gain wisdom that applies to every generation.

In conclusion, the Quran teaches through clear commandments, allegories, parables, and historical examples. Each serves a different purpose, but all point toward the same truth: submission to God and the pursuit of righteousness. Among these historical accounts, none is more central to understanding the Quran's historical message than the story of Mecca. It is there that the religion of Abraham was restored through the Prophet Muhammad, providing the historical foundation for many of the Quran's teachings and the events that shaped the early community of believers.

Section 10. The Story of Mecca

When studying the Holy Quran, two overarching themes emerge. First, God reintroduces the religion and example of Abraham to the world to reestablish the truth and end religious divisions. The Quran calls believers to follow in Abraham's footsteps, emphasizing his devotion to one God and his rejection of idolatry. This reintroduction of Abraham's faith reminds humanity of the original covenant between God and humankind.

The second theme in the Quran is the narration of Prophet Muhammad's life and the struggles he and his followers endured to spread the message of submission to one God in a polytheistic society. Prophet Muhammad's monotheistic message directly challenged the religious, social, and economic power

structures of Mecca, a city dominated by powerful tribes. These tribes, as custodians of the Kaaba, had turned it into a center for idol worship, attracting pilgrims and generating significant economic benefits. Muhammad's teachings, which called for the destruction of idols and the exclusive worship of the one true God, threatened their way of life and authority.

The story of Mecca is deeply intertwined with the legacy of Abraham, who, along with his son Isma'il, built the Kaaba as a sacred house of worship dedicated to God. According to the Quran, the location of the Kaaba was marked by a divine sign, a meteorite, which Abraham interpreted as guidance from God. This meteorite became the cornerstone of the Kaaba, symbolizing God's covenant with humanity. However, over time, the Kaaba became a site of idol worship, and Abraham's original message of monotheism was lost. By the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the Kaaba housed 360 idol gods, representing the deities of Mecca's polytheistic society.

Prophet Muhammad's monotheistic teachings directly challenged these practices, prompting intense opposition from the Meccan elites. This resistance was rooted not only in religious beliefs but also in the economic and political power tied to the Kaaba's status as a center of idol worship. When Prophet Muhammad and his followers faced increasing persecution, they migrated to Medina in an event known as the Hijrah. This migration allowed them to practice their faith freely, but the Meccan tribes continued their hostility, seeking to destroy this new monotheistic community.

The Quran provides historical accounts of battles such as Badr, Uhud, and the Battle of the Trench. These confrontations were acts of self-defense, as Prophet Muhammad and his followers sought to protect themselves from Meccan aggression.

The Meccans' attempts to eradicate this new monotheistic community stemmed from their rejection of monotheism and their determination to preserve polytheism. Understanding these events is essential for appreciating the Quran's role in restoring the faith of Abraham and the challenges faced by the early believers.

The Quran's emphasis on Abraham's faith reminds believers to return continually to the worship of God alone and reject every form of idolatry, whether literal idols or modern forms of misplaced devotion such as materialism, power, or self-worship. The history of Mecca demonstrates the courage required to remain faithful to God's guidance, even when doing so invites opposition.

The story of Mecca also reveals how easily God's guidance can become corrupted when people replace His commandments with traditions, customs, and beliefs of their own making. What began as Abraham's House of worship eventually became a center of idol worship because people gradually departed from God's original guidance.

In conclusion, the Story of Mecca reminds believers that the greatest danger is not merely open disbelief but also the gradual corruption of God's message through human additions and false practices. Throughout history, many people have sincerely believed they were serving God while unknowingly following traditions that departed from His guidance. This danger is addressed throughout the Quran in its warnings about the misbeliever, whose false beliefs and practices distort the truth while appearing righteous in his own eyes.

Section 11. The Misbeliever

Quran 25:26 That Day, the dominion as of right and truth shall be wholly for God, the Most Merciful: it will be a day of dire difficulty for the misbelievers.

Quran 25:55 Yet do they worship besides the Most Gracious things that can neither profit them nor harm them: and the misbeliever is a helper of evil against his own Lord!

The Dangers of Misbelief

One of the greatest dangers of misbelief is its ability to blur the distinction between righteousness and error. When those who claim to follow God's guidance fail to separate themselves from unrighteous practices, future generations may mistake those practices for part of God's religion. Over time, human traditions, customs, and even superstitions become intertwined with divine revelation.

As these erroneous beliefs and practices are passed down, they become increasingly difficult to distinguish from God's original message. The result is a religion that contains human additions, leading people away from God's guidance while they sincerely believe they are following Him. This demonstrates the importance of preserving the purity of faith by separating divine guidance from human invention.

The Quran repeatedly warns believers to remain vigilant so that truth is not mixed with falsehood. Believers must continually examine what they have inherited, ensuring that their worship and conduct remain rooted in God's guidance rather than in traditions that have developed over time.

Righteous believers are responsible for ensuring that their conduct remains distinct from those who reject God's guidance. This separation protects future generations from confusing false practices with divine law and helps preserve the integrity of God's message.

Believers must resist the temptation to conform to social pressures or adopt practices that contradict God's guidance. Instead, they should strive to model righteous conduct, providing a clear example for others to follow.

The concept of the misbeliever serves as a warning against allowing truth to become mixed with error. When believers fail to distinguish between God's guidance and human tradition, confusion inevitably follows. Remaining faithful to God's revelation requires continual self-examination, humility, and the willingness to abandon anything that cannot be supported by His guidance.

The Quran emphasizes the importance of preserving the purity of faith. By rejecting distortions and remaining steadfast in righteousness, believers help ensure that God's message is passed from one generation to the next without corruption.

In conclusion, the misbeliever serves as a warning to remain vigilant in protecting the integrity of God's guidance. God's truth must never be compromised by human traditions or distorted by false beliefs. This requires believers not only to examine what they believe but also to develop the discipline necessary to live according to God's guidance every day. One of the greatest disciplines God has given believers for strengthening faith, self-control, and obedience is the month of Ramadan, during which they learn to master their desires while drawing closer to Him.

Section 12. Ramadan: A Discipline for Unity and Purpose

Fasting during Ramadan involves abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs from dawn until sunset. However, it is more than a physical exercise; it is a spiritual discipline aimed at purifying the soul and strengthening the believer's relationship with God. Through fasting, believers develop self-restraint, learn to control their desires, and grow in piety.

Millions of believers worldwide observe Ramadan simultaneously, creating a shared sense of purpose and unity. This collective act of worship demonstrates the power of believers joining together in obedience to God, strengthening their commitment to righteousness and their concern for one another.

Overcoming Bad Habits and Building Discipline: During Ramadan, believers are encouraged to seek God's help in overcoming bad habits and establishing new, positive ones. The discipline cultivated through fasting strengthens the believer's ability to obey God and avoid harmful behaviors. This self-discipline is not confined to the holy month but extends throughout the year, fostering a more purposeful and balanced life.

By emphasizing self-restraint, mindfulness, and spiritual connection, Ramadan inspires believers to resist temptation and focus on what truly matters: their relationship with God and their commitment to righteousness.

Moderation and the Spirit of Ramadan: The daily fast break during Ramadan is intended to be a modest meal, just enough to sustain energy and replenish the body. Overindulgence not only contradicts the spirit of self-control but also diminishes the physical and spiritual benefits of fasting.

By practicing moderation, believers honor the true essence of Ramadan and reinforce their commitment to self-restraint.

In a world often characterized by excess and materialism, the lessons of Ramadan remind us of the importance of balance and mindful living. By rejecting overindulgence and embracing simplicity, believers demonstrate that lasting contentment comes through obedience to God rather than the pursuit of worldly desires.

The Night of Power: A special night during Ramadan, the Night of Power is considered more spiritually powerful than a thousand months of worship. This night marks the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad, a pivotal moment in human history. Believers dedicate this period to increased prayer, reflection, and seeking God's guidance. By strengthening their relationship with God, believers gain wisdom, clarity, and renewed determination to live according to His will.

The shared experience of Ramadan also reminds believers that they are not alone in their faith. As millions worship, fast, and seek God's mercy together, they demonstrate the strength that comes from a community united in devotion to its Creator.

In conclusion, Ramadan is not merely a month of fasting but a lifelong lesson in discipline, moderation, and devotion to God. Its principles continue long after the month has ended, shaping the believer's character and strengthening both personal faith and the bonds that unite the community of believers. While Ramadan brings believers together through a month of shared worship and sacrifice, God has also established a regular weekly gathering where believers assemble to remember Him, encourage one another, and strengthen their community. This gathering is found in Friday's congregational prayer, a weekly reminder that

faith is both a personal commitment and a shared responsibility.

Section 13. Friday's Congregational Prayer

Quran 62:9-10 O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, the Day of Assembly, hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of God and leave off business and traffic: that is best for you if you but knew!

And when the Prayer is finished, you may disperse through the land and seek the Bounty of God, and celebrate the Praises of God often and without stint: that you may prosper.

Friday's congregational prayer, known as Jumu'ah, holds a special place in the monotheistic tradition. While traditionally associated with Muslims, the Quran's address to "O you who believe" suggests a broader application, inviting all believers in God to participate in this sacred gathering.

Friday Prayer: A Gathering for Unity and Community Building: Jumu'ah is traditionally performed in groups, requiring as few as three people: one to deliver the sermon and lead the prayer, and two others in attendance. This simplicity underscores its accessibility, making it possible for families or small groups to observe the practice together. At its core, Friday prayer reminds believers of their shared commitment to God and their collective responsibility to uphold His guidance.

By emphasizing unity through shared worship, Friday prayer brings believers together not only to fulfill a religious obligation but also to foster meaningful relationships and build a stronger sense of community.

When Jumu'ah becomes a place for collaboration and mutual support, it extends beyond its spiritual function and strengthens the bonds between those who seek to serve God.

Transforming Jumu'ah into a Catalyst for Growth: In many settings, Friday prayers fulfill the obligation of worship but fall short of creating a deeper sense of community. Worshipers often leave as strangers, missing the opportunity to form meaningful connections. By reimagining Jumu'ah as a community-building event, believers can unlock its full potential. Beyond prayer, it can become a place for fostering friendships, mentoring relationships, and even professional collaborations. This approach aligns with the Quran's call to "hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of God" while celebrating His blessings and seeking His guidance in every aspect of life.

If believers use the time after Jumu'ah to discuss relevant issues, share resources, and collaborate on initiatives that benefit both the religious community and society, the blessings of gathering together become even more evident. These gatherings can inspire actions that promote righteousness, community service, and personal development.

Structuring the Friday Sermon: The structure of Jumu'ah includes two cycles of prayer (rak'ahs) preceded by a two-part sermon (khutbah). The first part traditionally focuses on praising God and mentioning the Prophet Muhammad. However, as the phrase "All praises are due to God" indicates, ultimate praise belongs solely to God. While peace and blessings are offered to Prophet Muhammad and the other prophets, the sermon should keep its primary emphasis on God's sovereignty and guidance. Highlighting the examples of the prophets as models of righteousness supports this purpose without

diminishing God's supreme authority.

The second part of the sermon should address practical and relevant community concerns. By focusing on collective goals, righteous conduct, and spiritual growth, this portion can inspire meaningful action and unite the congregation around shared values. This approach transforms Friday prayer from a weekly religious obligation into an opportunity for believers to strengthen one another in faith and good works.

The Purpose of Gathering: Friday prayer demonstrates that worship is not merely an individual act, but also a shared responsibility. When believers gather to remember God, encourage one another, and work together in righteousness, they strengthen both their faith and their community. The true strength of a community is found not in its size or identity but in its shared commitment to God's guidance.

In conclusion, Friday's congregational prayer is more than a weekly religious obligation; it is a reminder that believers are called to worship God together as one community. While Jumu'ah brings believers together on a regular basis, God has also established a greater gathering that unites believers from every nation, language, and background. That gathering is the Hajj, the pilgrimage to the House first dedicated by Abraham for all who sincerely submit themselves to God.

Section 14. The Hajj

Quran 2:125 Remember, We made the House a place of assembly for mankind and a place of safety, and take the station of Abraham as a place of prayer. We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round or use it as a retreat or bow or prostrate themselves therein in prayer.

Quran 3:97 Full of clear messages. It is the place where Abraham once stood, and whoever enters it finds inner peace. Hence, pilgrimage to the Temple is a duty owed to God by all people who can undertake it. And as for those who deny the truth, verily, God does not need anything in all the worlds.

The Hajj, the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, is one of the most profound acts of submission to God, symbolizing monotheism and devotion. Rooted in the legacy of Abraham and Isma'il, it stands as a universal call for all who submit their will to God to come together in worship. However, access to this sacred act is currently restricted by the Saudi government to only those who identify as Muslims. This raises significant questions about the inclusivity of Abraham's faith and the universal nature of submission to God.

The Meaning of "Muslim" and Its Implications: The term "Muslim" translates to "one who submits their will to God." By this definition, anyone who genuinely submits to God, regardless of their religious label, can be considered a Muslim. This broad understanding challenges the exclusivity with which access to Mecca is granted. If all who submit to God are united

under the same universal faith, why should linguistic or cultural labels determine who can perform the Hajj?

Quran 42:13 reinforces this idea, stating that all prophets and their followers belong to one religion and commanding them not to divide into sects. Restricting access to the Kaaba based on religious labels contradicts this command, creating divisions within the universal religion of Abraham.

As someone who submits to God without identifying with the Arabic term “Muslim,” I find this exclusivity troubling. If submission to God is the core requirement, then all who uphold the pillars of faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and the declaration of faith in one God should be welcomed to perform the Hajj. This inclusivity aligns with the principles of unity and shared submission that underlie Abraham’s faith and the Quran’s teachings.

Labels Versus True Submission: The exclusivity of the Hajj also raises questions about the validity of religious labels. Can all who claim the label “Muslim” truly say they submit their will to God? Or does genuine submission go deeper than merely identifying with a specific term?

The tendency to prioritize labels over sincere submission has contributed to unnecessary divisions among believers. By focusing on outward identities rather than inward devotion, people risk losing sight of the shared purpose of worshiping and obeying God. In its purest form, the Hajj calls believers to look beyond labels and unite in humble submission before their Creator.

The universal call of the Hajj reminds believers that their faith is ultimately defined not by the name they wear but by their devotion to God and the righteousness of their lives.

In conclusion, the Hajj is more than a physical pilgrimage; it is a profound symbol of unity and submission to God. Its true essence lies in bringing together all who sincerely seek to worship Him, transcending labels and divisions. Yet the pilgrimage itself is only one expression of submission. The same devotion demonstrated during the Hajj must continue throughout a believer's daily life through regular worship, obedience, and remembrance of God. That daily relationship with God begins and is sustained through the prayers He has commanded, making prayer the foundation of a believer's life of faith.

Section 15. Making Prayer

Quran 2:120: Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion. Say: "The Guidance of God, that is the only Guidance." Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then would you find neither Protector nor helper against God.

This verse reflects the tension when religious groups insist on the exclusivity of their interpretations and practices. While initially directed at Prophet Muhammad and his followers, this warning holds relevance in today's religious and cultural dynamics.

In the Holy Quran, God prescribes five daily prayers for all who believe in Him, emphasizing gratitude and purification from evil. These prayers are a cornerstone of faith, allowing believers to align themselves with God's will. While traditionally associated with Muslims, the Quran's message is universal, addressing all who submit to God regardless of their label or language.

Prayer Beyond Labels: Although I do not identify with the label “Muslim,” I submit my will to God and believe in the Holy Quran as His final revelation. Many Muslims hold that the Quran is exclusively for those who practice Islam. Still, it guides all righteous people who seek God, regardless of their religious identity. This perspective aligns with the Quran’s emphasis on universality and inclusivity, providing a space for all believers to connect with God on their unique paths.

In a world where divisions often arise from rigid identities and exclusionary practices, this understanding of prayer as a universal act of submission encourages believers to place their loyalty to God above religious labels. By emphasizing shared faith over labels, believers can foster unity and mutual respect while remaining faithful to God’s guidance.

Prayer in Every Language: A significant tradition within the Muslim community is the belief that prayers must be performed in Arabic to be accepted and blessed by God. However, the Quran emphasizes that God’s message was revealed in a language understandable to its original audience to ensure clarity and accessibility. Extending this principle, it follows that those offering prayers should also be understood, making native languages equally valid for communication with God.

Requiring non-Arabic speakers to learn one of the world’s most challenging languages creates a barrier to understanding and connection with God. This insistence contradicts the Quran’s guidance to make God’s will clear to everyone. This perspective underscores the importance of accessibility and understanding in fostering unity.

Prayer as a Personal Act: The Quran's teachings suggest that sincerity and intention are the keys to meaningful prayer, rather than the specific language used. By praying in one's native language, believers can fully comprehend and internalize the message, deepening their connection with God. This approach empowers individuals to engage with their faith authentically, breaking down barriers created by rigid traditions.

This inclusive view of prayer challenges the exclusivity that often accompanies cultural or religious practices. By valuing sincerity and understanding over conformity, believers can create a more open and welcoming spiritual environment.

Believers can strengthen their relationship with God by emphasizing shared submission over rigid traditions or labels. This inclusive approach reflects the Quran's vision of unity among those who sincerely seek His guidance.

The Danger of Exclusivity: At the time of the Quran's revelation, God's new believers faced resistance from those who adhered strictly to their own religious traditions. Today, a similar dynamic persists, where many Muslims, Christians, and Jews view their practices as the only valid path to God. This mindset fosters division and prevents believers from recognizing the shared principles of submission, righteousness, and devotion that unite them.

When groups demand conformity to their specific rituals and interpretations, they close themselves off to dialogue and mutual understanding. This mirrors the warning in Quran 2:120, cautioning against prioritizing human desires and traditions over the divine guidance that transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Prayer as a Universal Act of Submission: I perform the same five daily prayers as Muslims, facing the Kaaba, the house of worship built by Abraham, but I pray in English. This choice reflects my belief that the essence of prayer lies in sincerity and understanding, not in rigid adherence to a specific language. While Arabic holds a special place as the language of the Quran, worship is most meaningful when the worshipper fully understands and internalizes its message.

By encouraging communities to pray in their native languages, believers can establish a deeper connection with God. This approach aligns with the Quran's emphasis on accessibility and clarity, ensuring God's message resonates across cultures and languages.

The Role of Language in Worship: The insistence on Arabic as the only valid language for prayer can create barriers to spiritual growth, particularly for non-Arabic speakers. If prayer becomes a mere recitation of words without understanding, its deeper spiritual significance may be lost.

By embracing native languages in worship, believers can experience a more personal and meaningful connection with God, fostering gratitude, humility, and devotion.

While preserving the sacredness of religious practices is essential, adapting them to different cultural contexts can make them more accessible and relevant. This balance ensures that worship remains a living, dynamic expression of faith rather than rigid adherence to ritual.

The Quran's assertion that "The Guidance of God, that is the only Guidance" offers a profound lesson. It challenges believers to prioritize divine guidance over human traditions and to seek unity in shared principles rather than divisive practices.

By emphasizing sincerity, understanding, and inclusivity in worship, believers can honor the essence of God's guidance and strengthen their relationship with Him.

A Universal Approach to Prayer: I diverge from traditional Muslim practices in another way: the concluding prayer. Muslims often end their prayers silently by asking God to bless Prophet Muhammad and his followers, as He has blessed Abraham and his followers, and to exalt Prophet Muhammad and his followers, as He has exalted Abraham and his followers. While this prayer holds historical significance, I believe it places undue emphasis on Prophet Muhammad and his community, inadvertently creating distinctions between them and other prophets and their followers.

To reflect the Quran's message of inclusivity, rather than saying what Muslims traditionally say, I conclude my prayers during the silent portion with these words:

"O God, please exalt and bless all those who have repented from their sins and follow the example of Abraham, as You have exalted and blessed Abraham and his followers." This phrasing includes all righteous believers who submit to God, regardless of their religious label, and reinforces the unity of those who strive to follow God's guidance.

By emphasizing the universality of faith and righteousness, believers can look beyond religious labels and recognize the shared truths that unite those who sincerely seek God.

The Call to Prayer: The call to prayer, or Adhan, is a beautiful and evocative tradition in Islam, often delivered in Arabic to inspire and invite believers to worship. However, I believe

that my call to prayer, like my prayers themselves, must be in English so that the people around me can understand it. For English speakers, hearing the call to prayer in their own language ensures that they comprehend the invitation and its meaning. While Arabic holds deep cultural and religious significance as the language of the Quran, the priority, in my view, is clarity and accessibility, enabling believers to develop a genuine connection with God.

Clarity Over Tradition: The traditional Adhan in Arabic is undeniably beautiful, but its purpose is not merely aesthetic—it is a call to worship. For those who do not speak or understand Arabic, the beauty of its sound may be appreciated while its message remains unknown.

By calling to prayer in English, I strive to align with the Quran’s emphasis on accessibility and guidance. The Quran was revealed in Arabic to ensure clarity for its original audience, but its universal message transcends language. Using native languages to convey God’s call makes His guidance more understandable and accessible.

A Personal Interpretation of Faith: I do not imply that Muslims are wrong for calling to prayer in Arabic. Their tradition is deeply rooted in the Islamic faith and deserves respect. However, I believe it would be equally wrong to assert that my choice to call to prayer in English is incorrect. Serving God requires me to follow my understanding of the Quran and not merely conform to interpretations with which I disagree. Faith, for me, is a dynamic and evolving relationship with God. Each believer is called to deepen his personal understanding and connection with Him.

Faith Adapted to the People: Tradition is valuable, but faith must also adapt to meet the needs of those who practice it. Language plays a crucial role in ensuring that God's message is accessible and meaningful to all. By calling to prayer in English, I ensure that my worship aligns with my understanding of God's guidance while also inviting others to connect with faith in a way that resonates with them.

By prioritizing clarity and understanding over rigid adherence to tradition, believers can create a more open and welcoming spiritual environment.

In conclusion, the call to prayer is more than a ritual; it is a profound act of communication and invitation. By prioritizing understanding and inclusivity, believers can ensure that God's message reaches all who sincerely seek Him. True worship is ultimately measured not by religious labels, cultural traditions, or the language a person speaks, but by belief in God, righteous conduct, and obedience to His guidance.

Yet throughout history, many individuals have claimed to act in God's name while living in direct opposition to these principles. Their actions have caused countless people to confuse the teachings of the Quran with the crimes of those who misuse religion to justify violence. Before examining the true meaning of Jihad, it is therefore necessary to distinguish between righteous believers and those who commit acts of terrorism in God's name.

Section 16. Islamic Terrorist

Quran 5:27 Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold! They each presented a sacrifice to God: it was accepted from one but not from the other. Said the latter: “Be sure I will slay you.” “Surely,” said the former, “God doth accept the sacrifice of righteous people.”

Quran 26:227 Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!

These verses highlight the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness, a principle that lies at the heart of the Quran and directly addresses the issue of Islamic terrorism. In today’s world, where acts of terror are often associated with Islam, many people struggle to distinguish between righteous Muslims and those who engage in violence and mischief. The Quran provides clear guidance: true believers work for righteousness, while those who perpetrate evil do not reflect God’s will.

The Characteristics of True Believers: In the Holy Quran, God establishes three essential characteristics of those who are blessed by Him.

Belief in God alone
Belief in the Last Day
Working righteousness

These criteria exclude those who claim to believe but engage in evil deeds. The Quran warns believers to beware of those who create mischief while deceiving themselves into thinking they are doing good. Such individuals are described as true fools, though they fail to realize it. By emphasizing the Quran's principles of righteousness, believers can challenge the narrative that equates Islam with violence and demonstrate the true essence of the faith.

The Parable of Cain and Abel: The story of Cain and Abel illustrates the danger of envy, arrogance, and unrighteousness. Cain believed in God but murdered his brother out of jealousy when God accepted Abel's gift and rejected his own. As the Quran explains, God accepts gifts only from the righteous. This story warns against using God's name to justify evil actions. Like Cain, terrorists who murder innocent people in the name of God are deluded and will face consequences in the afterlife.

This parable offers a powerful lesson about the misuse of religion to justify violence. It challenges the narrative of religious extremism by highlighting that true faith is rooted in humility, righteousness, and submission to God's will—qualities absent in those who perpetrate terror.

Righteousness Above All: A righteous believer would never support or aid an unrighteous individual, even if it were their own father, brother, or son. This principle underscores the Quran's emphasis on justice and accountability, rejecting any form of tribalism or loyalty that compromises righteousness. By prioritizing righteousness over identity, believers can counter misunderstanding, reject false loyalties, and promote a more just and unified society.

The problem of Islamic terrorism reflects broader issues of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. By focusing on the Quran's teachings of righteousness, believers can challenge the false narratives that equate Islam with violence and promote a deeper understanding of the faith.

In conclusion, the Quran's clear distinction between righteous believers and those who engage in mischief provides a powerful response to Islamic terrorism. It reminds us that violence committed in God's name is a betrayal of His guidance, not an expression of it. Understanding this distinction is essential before considering another term that has also been widely misunderstood: Jihad. While many people equate Jihad with violence or war, the Quran presents it as something far different—a lifelong struggle to obey God, share His message, and build a righteous community.

Section 17. Jihad

The best definition of Jihad I have encountered is “struggle” rather than the often misunderstood definition of “war.” Jihad is a multifaceted endeavor to please God, encompassing personal, social, and communal efforts to live a righteous life.

These three stages of Jihad provide a practical framework for living according to God’s guidance and fulfilling the responsibilities of faith.

The Three Stages of Jihad

The Greater Jihad

Personal Struggle

The External Jihad

Sharing God’s Message

The Communal Jihad

Building a Unified Community

The Greater Jihad: Personal Struggle: The first and most fundamental stage of Jihad is the internal struggle within oneself to obey God and live according to His will. Often called the greater Jihad, this stage involves resisting temptations, desires, and weaknesses to align with God’s guidance. It is about cultivating self-discipline, purity, and sincerity in faith. Winning this inner battle is essential because, without personal righteousness, believers cannot effectively contribute to the larger mission of serving God and humanity.

This internal struggle is a call to reject materialism, moral relativism, and selfishness that often characterize modern society. By focusing on personal growth and aligning with God's will, believers can set an example of integrity and purpose that reflects the values God calls believers to live by.

The External Struggle: Sharing God's Message: The second stage of Jihad is the external struggle to communicate God's message to the world. This does not mean forcing beliefs on others but rather striving to share the truth with kindness, wisdom, and compassion, as instructed in the Quran. It involves calling people to righteousness, helping them understand the importance of worshipping God alone, and guiding them toward good conduct. This stage represents a struggle for education, outreach, and engagement with society through peaceful and respectful means.

This external Jihad counters misinformation and prejudice with truth and understanding. It emphasizes dialogue and mutual respect while encouraging others to reflect upon God's guidance. By sharing God's message with sincerity and humility, believers can help others better understand the values of justice, mercy, and devotion.

The Communal Jihad: Building a Unified Community: The third stage of Jihad is the communal effort to unite righteous believers into a cohesive and harmonious community. This stage seeks to transcend divisions and sects, creating a society based on justice, mercy, and devotion to God. It is about collective action, forming a community that reflects God's will on earth and serves as a model of good conduct for others to follow.

The effort to build a unified community offers a powerful example of what can be achieved when believers work together in righteousness.

By promoting peace, justice, and the common good, they demonstrate how humanity should live in harmony with God's teachings.

In its true essence, Jihad is not about conflict or war but about personal growth, peaceful outreach, and community-building. It represents the ongoing effort to live according to God's commandments, spread His message with wisdom and compassion, and build a righteous community devoted to serving Him.

By focusing on the greater Jihad of personal growth, believers can cultivate the moral integrity needed to navigate the challenges of life. Through the external Jihad of sharing God's message, they can engage with others meaningfully, encouraging understanding and reflection. And by embracing the communal Jihad of building a unified community, they can demonstrate the transformative power of faith in creating a just and harmonious society.

In conclusion, when understood as a struggle for righteousness, Jihad provides a profound framework for living according to God's guidance.

It calls believers to rise above division and conflict, focusing instead on personal growth, outreach, and community-building. By embodying these principles, believers can contribute to a more unified and compassionate world, reflecting the true essence of God's guidance and the teachings of the Quran.

This understanding of Jihad naturally leads to the next question: What is the declaration of faith, and what does it truly mean to declare one's complete submission to God?

Section 18. A Declaration of Faith

Quran 60:12 “O Prophet! When believing women come to you pledging their allegiance to you, that they will not associate anything with God, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor fabricate falsehood, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their pledge and ask God to forgive them. Surely God is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Quran 48:10 “Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you are actually pledging allegiance to God. The Hand of God is over their hands. Whoever breaks his covenant does so only to his own loss, but whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with God, He will grant him a great reward.”

Throughout this chapter, we have seen that God invites every believer to learn, to reflect, to develop understanding, and to grow in the moral intelligence by which they distinguish truth from falsehood, righteousness from evil, and guidance from misguidance.

This naturally raises another important question.

What does it really mean to declare ourselves believers?

Today, many people associate a declaration of faith with the brief statement commonly known as the Shahadah:

“There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”

This declaration is deeply meaningful because it affirms belief in the one true God and acknowledges Muhammad as His messenger. Yet when we examine the Quran, we find that the declarations of faith made during the lifetime of the Prophet involved far more than the recitation of a single sentence.

The Quran describes believers entering into a covenant with God.

They pledged not only their belief, but also their conduct:

To reject idolatry.

To uphold honesty.

To avoid theft, adultery, slander, and injustice.

To obey God in what is right.

Their declaration was not merely an affirmation of belief.

It was a conscious commitment to live according to the guidance they had accepted.

This challenges each of us to ask an important question.

If I were standing before my Creator today, how would I express my own declaration of faith?

Would I simply repeat words that I have memorized?

Or could I express, in my own words, what I understand myself to be promising God?

I believe this question is important because understanding always carries responsibility.

As we have seen throughout this chapter, God taught Adam before asking him to demonstrate what he had learned.

Likewise, I believe every believer should understand the commitments they are making before declaring their faith before God.

A declaration without understanding may satisfy tradition.

A declaration with understanding becomes a conscious covenant between the believer and the Creator.

For this reason, I have chosen to express my own declaration in the form of a personal covenant—not because I believe others must adopt my words, but because I believe every sincere believer should be able to express, in their own words, the

understanding they have developed through their own journey with God.

The section that follows is therefore not presented as a model that others are required to repeat.

It is simply my own Covenant of Understanding with God.

Section 19, My Covenant of Understanding with God

Throughout this chapter, I have shared what I believe God has taught me through my study of the Holy Quran. What follows is not presented as a covenant that others are required to make. It is my personal covenant before my Creator, expressing the understanding that I believe He has graciously developed in me through years of seeking His guidance.

As Adam demonstrated the understanding that God had given him, I now present my own Covenant of Understanding before my Creator.

My Covenant of Understanding with God

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

I bear witness that there is only one God, the Creator of all things, who is known among the nations by different names and languages, but who remains the one true God over all creation.

I bear witness in all of God's prophets, from Adam to Muhammad, and I will make no distinction between them, for they were all chosen by God to deliver His guidance according to His will.

I understand that God gave the same essential message to His prophets, from Noah to Muhammad. Therefore, I will not participate in the religious divisions that mankind has created. I will strive to remain faithful to the religion of Abraham by obeying God, encouraging what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and avoiding what I understand God has forbidden.

I understand that I will stand before God alone and answer for my own life. Therefore, I will strive to stand for justice in every situation, even when it is against myself, my family, my friends, the rich, or the poor.

I understand that loyalty belongs first to God. Therefore, I will not knowingly support those who reject His guidance, associate partners with Him, or encourage others to disobey Him. Neither will I give my loyalty to those who knowingly support such rebellion against God.

I understand that righteousness is greater than religious labels. Therefore, I will support and help all who believe in God, the Last Day, and strive to live righteously, regardless of the religious community to which they belong or the language in which they call upon the one God who created all things.

This is the understanding that I believe God has graciously taught me through my study of the Holy Quran.

Knowing this, I make this covenant before my Creator.

I will strive to live according to this understanding.

I will strive not to repeat the mistakes that caused those before me to become divided in religion.

I ask God to judge me according to my sincerity, to correct me where I have misunderstood His guidance, and to continue teaching me throughout my life, for I remain a student before the same Teacher—my Creator.

Section 20, Al Fatiha: The Prayer for Understanding

**In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds,
The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,
Master of the Day of Judgment.
You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.
Guide us to the Straight Path,
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your
grace, not of those who have earned Your displeasure nor
of those who have gone astray.**

No chapter of the Quran is recited more often than Al-Fatiha.

Every day, believing men and women throughout the world repeat these verses as they stand before God in prayer.

Because it is so familiar, many people recite it from memory without pausing to consider the depth of what they are asking.

Yet I believe Al-Fatiha is much more than the opening chapter of the Quran.

It is the prayer that prepares the believer to study the entire Quran.

The prayer begins by directing our attention to God alone.

Before asking for guidance, we acknowledge His greatness, His mercy, His authority, and His judgment.

This reminds us that true understanding does not begin with ourselves.

It begins with God.

The prayer then turns from praise to dependence.

“You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.”

These words remind us that no human being can replace God as our ultimate Teacher.

Scholars may teach us.

Prophets may guide us.

Authors may share what they have learned.

But understanding itself is a gift that comes from God.

The heart of Al-Fatiha is found in one simple request.

“Guide us to the Straight Path.”

Throughout this chapter, we have explored what that request means.

It is not merely a request to know religious information.

It is a request for God to teach us.

To correct us when we are wrong.

To deepen our understanding.

To help us distinguish truth from falsehood.

To strengthen our character.

And to lead us toward the righteousness that pleases Him.

This prayer reminds us that guidance is not something we achieve once and possess forever.

It is something we continue to seek throughout our lives.

Every believer remains a student before God.

No matter how much we learn, we continue praying,

“Guide us.”

This also reminds us that no believer, teacher, or religious community possesses God's guidance as though it belonged to them.

We all stand before the same Teacher—our Creator.

We all depend upon His mercy.

We all continue learning.

For this reason, I hope this book will be read in the same spirit as Al-Fatiha is prayed.

Not as a demand that anyone accept my understanding.

But as an invitation to seek God's guidance together.

The understanding I have shared throughout these pages is the understanding that I believe God has graciously developed in me through my own journey with the Quran.

I offer it with gratitude to God, humility before Him, and respect for every reader's responsibility to seek His guidance personally.

My hope is that every reader will approach the Quran in the same spirit as Al-Fatiha is prayed—not seeking to prove existing beliefs, but sincerely asking God to teach, correct, and guide them. For every sincere believer remains a student before the same Teacher, and every day we continue praying the same prayer:

Guide us to the Straight Path

The beautiful answer to that prayer begins immediately. After teaching us what to ask, God immediately begins showing us the kind of people who walk the Straight Path and those who depart from it.

Section 21. Walking the Straight Path

Al-Fatiha ends with one of the most important prayers a believer can make:

“Guide us to the Straight Path—the path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have earned Your displeasure nor of those who have gone astray.”

As I continued studying the Quran, I noticed something that I had overlooked for many years. Immediately after teaching us this prayer, God begins answering it. The opening verses of Chapter 2 describe the very people mentioned in Al-Fatiha. It is as though God is saying, “You have asked Me to guide you. Now let Me show you the path.”

The first group consists of those who live under God’s grace. The Quran describes them as people who believe in the unseen, remain steadfast in prayer, use what God has given them for good, believe in all of God’s revelations and His messengers, and live with confidence in the Hereafter. These are the people walking the Straight Path because they continually seek God’s guidance and strive to align their lives with His will.

The second group consists of those who knowingly reject God’s guidance. The Quran describes people whose hearts have become hardened because they continually refuse the truth. While believers are called to share God’s message with them, only God knows what is in every heart and only He is the final Judge. Their example serves as a warning that repeatedly rejecting God’s guidance can eventually blind a person to the truth.

The third group consists of those who have gone astray. Some are misled by ignorance, while others deceive themselves by claiming faith without sincerely submitting to God. Their lives remind us that merely claiming to believe is not enough. True faith must be reflected in sincerity, humility, and obedience to

God's guidance.

As I reflected on these three groups, I realized that they are not simply descriptions of other people. They are mirrors in which every believer should examine himself. Each day we must ask whether we are drawing closer to God's guidance or drifting away from it. The Straight Path is not a destination we reach once and forever possess. It is a path we choose to walk every day.

This understanding also reminded me that God's guidance is never meant to produce pride or self-righteousness. The believer does not study the Quran to condemn others but to allow God's words to examine his own heart first. Only then can he sincerely encourage what is right, forbid what is wrong, and invite others toward God's guidance with wisdom, humility, and compassion. The opening of Chapter 2 taught me that God's answer to the prayer of Al-Fatiha is not merely information—it is transformation. God begins by teaching us the kind of character we should strive to develop and the attitudes we must avoid if we sincerely desire to walk the Straight Path. Every time I recite Al-Fatiha, I am reminded that I am once again asking God to continue that work within me.

Chapter Conclusion

As I look back on my journey through the Quran, I realize that it has never been merely a journey of acquiring knowledge. It has been a journey of coming to know my Creator, understanding His guidance, and allowing His words to transform my character. The more I studied, the more I discovered that the Quran continually invites every believer to seek understanding directly from God with humility, sincerity, and a willingness to be corrected.

Everything I have shared in this chapter reflects the understanding that I believe God has patiently developed in me over many years of study, prayer, and reflection. I do not offer it as the final word, but as my testimony of what I have come to understand from walking with the Quran. My hope is not that readers will simply accept my conclusions, but that they will open the Quran for themselves, pray as Al-Fatiha teaches, and ask God to guide them to the Straight Path.

If this chapter encourages even one person to seek God's guidance with a sincere heart rather than relying solely upon inherited traditions or the opinions of others, then it will have fulfilled its greatest purpose. For every believer remains a student before the same Teacher, and every day we continue praying the same prayer:

“Guide us to the Straight Path.”

Chapter 4

The Light of Moral Intelligence

Understanding the Symbolic Language

Section 1. The Distinction Between Right and Wrong

When God, the Creator, causes the light of His guidance, understanding, and peace to set on one group of people, He often causes it to rise on another. If our world seems dark and filled with evil today, it is because humanity has gradually turned away from God's guidance and failed to do what is necessary to receive His blessings. God promises that those who persist in wrongdoing descend into the darkness of moral ignorance, while those who believe, encourage what is right, and forbid what is wrong rise into the light of His moral intelligence, understanding, and peace.

Morals: As I reflected on the subject of morals, I noticed that many words closely associated with them—ethical, good, right, honest, decent, honorable, just, and principled—all point toward the same central idea: the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

What surprised me, however, was discovering how the common definition of morals has changed over the years. Older definitions emphasized the ability to discern right from wrong. Many modern definitions, however, describe morals as standards determined by individuals or society. To me, this change reflects something much deeper than a shift in language. It reflects a shift in how people understand the source of morality itself.

If society determines what is right and wrong, then morality changes whenever society changes. But if God is the source of morality, then the distinction between right and wrong remains constant regardless of culture, tradition, or the passing of time.

As I continued studying God's guidance, I came to understand that moral intelligence begins with one simple question:

"Is this right, or is this wrong?"

When people stop asking that question, they gradually lose the ability to recognize honesty, justice, decency, and righteousness. Eventually, they lose the capacity for sound judgment because they no longer have a fixed standard by which to measure their thoughts and actions. Laws alone cannot preserve a society whose people no longer recognize moral boundaries.

As I reflected on God's creation, I began to see morals as being like water. Just as nothing living can flourish without water, no person can grow in wisdom or understanding without continually examining the difference between right and wrong. Every sincere search for the right course of action requires thought, reflection, and the pursuit of understanding.

Like water, morals can be either pure or polluted. A criminal may believe it was “wrong” for someone to report his crime to the police and therefore justify murder in his own mind. His moral reasoning still exists, but it has become polluted because it is no longer measured against God’s standard of right and wrong.

This led me to understand that pure morals begin by aligning our understanding of right and wrong with what God declares to be right and wrong.

The more I reflected on the nature of water, the more clearly I saw the lesson it teaches. When the sun shines upon water, it rises into the heavens, leaving its impurities behind. It forms clouds, travels wherever God sends it, and returns to the earth as refreshing rain. Flowing water remains fresh because it is continually moving, while stagnant water gradually becomes polluted.

I believe our morals follow the same pattern. As long as we continually examine ourselves in the light of God’s guidance, asking whether our thoughts, words, and actions are right or wrong, our character continues to grow and be purified. But when we stop examining ourselves, our morals become stagnant, allowing pride, selfishness, and false ideas to pollute our character.

Every day we encounter influences that shape our thinking. Along life’s journey we collect both good and bad ideas, just as water gathers impurities as it flows across the earth. But when we honestly examine ourselves before God, we leave behind what corrupts us and continue growing toward righteousness.

Today, much of humanity lives in the darkness of moral ignorance because it has abandoned God’s unchanging standard of right and wrong. Yet God’s light still shines upon those who sincerely seek Him.

His guidance has the power to purify polluted morals, restore clear judgment, and transform both individuals and societies.

As I continued studying God's guidance, I also began to notice that He teaches these moral truths through a remarkable symbolic language woven throughout His creation and the Scriptures. Light and darkness, water, fire, wind, and earth are more than elements of nature—they become symbols through which God reveals deeper lessons about human character, righteousness, and the path that leads back to Him. Understanding this symbolic language opened an entirely new way for me to read the Bible and recognize the timeless moral truths hidden within its stories.

Section 2. The Symbolic Language

As I continued studying the Scriptures, I began to notice something that changed the way I read many biblical stories. I came to understand that many of its teachings are communicated through a rich symbolic language. Rather than seeing these stories as accounts of ancient people alone, I began asking what God might be teaching through the symbols themselves.

Even today we naturally use symbolic language. If someone is described as “a rat,” “a snake,” or “a dog,” most people immediately recognize that the words are describing character rather than the person's physical nature. The symbol communicates a deeper meaning than the literal words alone.

This realization helped me appreciate why symbolic language has been such a powerful teaching tool throughout history. When many people could not read, stories, pictures, familiar objects, animals, and the natural world provided memorable ways to communicate profound truths. Symbols allowed moral and spiritual lessons to be understood, remembered, and passed from

one generation to the next.

As I reflected on God's creation, I also noticed that the natural world itself teaches through symbols. Earth, wind, fire, and water are not only physical elements; they also illustrate different aspects of human life and character. In the understanding I have come to develop, earth represents the physical world in which we live, wind represents our emotions, fire symbolizes human desires and passions, and water represents our morals. Likewise, darkness symbolizes moral ignorance, while light represents God's guidance, understanding, and righteousness.

Once I began viewing these symbols together, many familiar biblical stories took on new meaning. The symbols were no longer isolated images but part of a common language that repeatedly pointed toward the same moral truths. They became another way through which God teaches those who sincerely seek His guidance.

The Light of Moral Intelligence

The Purpose of the Symbolic Language

To me, the greatest purpose of this symbolic language is not simply to make stories interesting but to help believers develop moral intelligence. When we understand the symbolism of light and darkness, earth, wind, fire, and water, we begin to recognize the moral struggles taking place both within ourselves and throughout society.

Fire, for example, reminds me of human desires and passions that can either be controlled or allowed to consume us. Water reminds me that our morals must continually be purified by God's guidance if they are to remain clear. Light reminds me that God's truth exposes what darkness attempts to hide.

Each symbol points beyond itself toward a lesson about righteousness.

As I continued studying these symbols, I also came to understand that they have the power to unite rather than divide.

Symbols speak to universal aspects of human experience that cross cultures, languages, and traditions. When viewed through God's guidance, they invite believers to look beyond religious labels and consider the deeper moral principles God is teaching.

The Relevance of Symbolic Stories: Throughout this chapter, I will share several symbolic interpretations that have helped shape my own understanding of Scripture. My purpose is not to claim that these are the only possible interpretations, but to share how God has used these stories to teach me lessons about righteousness, human character, and society.

Whether the story concerns Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Tower of Babel, or other familiar accounts, I have come to believe that their symbolic lessons remain as relevant today as when they were first recorded. They continue to challenge us to examine ourselves, distinguish between right and wrong, and seek God's light rather than remain in the darkness of moral ignorance.

With this understanding of symbolic language in mind, we can now begin exploring how these stories reveal God's timeless wisdom and what they teach us about ourselves, our societies, and our relationship with Him.

Section 3. The Common Language

As I continued reflecting on the symbolic language of Scripture, one story began to take on an entirely new meaning for me—the story of the Tower of Babel.

Traditionally, the story is understood as explaining the origin of different spoken languages. Yet as I studied it, I found myself asking another question: What was the common language that humanity lost?

The story begins with a people united in purpose as they set out to build a great tower. Rather than honoring God, however, their efforts became a monument to human pride and achievement. As I looked at the world today, I could not help noticing similar patterns. Nations compete to build the tallest buildings, the greatest monuments, and the most impressive displays of power. While these achievements are remarkable, they also remind me how easily humanity becomes more impressed with its own accomplishments than with the wisdom and guidance of its Creator.

The story of Babel caused me to ask whether God's judgment involved more than the introduction of different spoken languages. I began to wonder whether it also symbolized the loss of a common understanding of right and wrong.

As I reflected on this, another passage of Scripture came to mind. The Bible says that God created man in His image. For many years, I understood this the way many others do—that God's image referred in some way to humanity's physical appearance. But as I continued studying the symbolic language of Scripture, I came to understand it differently.

God is not teaching that we physically resemble Him. Rather, I believe He created humanity to reflect His moral image—His perfect understanding of right and wrong. In other words, we were created with the capacity to recognize righteousness, pursue justice, and distinguish truth from falsehood according to God's guidance.

This understanding also caused me to think differently about the words man and woman. In my understanding of the symbolism, man represents the moral mind created to reflect God's image of right and wrong, while woman, as the womb of the mind, represents the nurturing influence through which that moral understanding is developed. Just as a mother helps shape the character of her children, every family and every society helps shape the moral understanding of those growing within it.

A child's understanding of right and wrong is therefore not fully formed at birth. It develops through the influence of parents, teachers, communities, and ultimately through God's guidance. Throughout life, our minds are continually being shaped by the voices we choose to follow.

Returning to the Tower of Babel, I came to believe that before humanity's rebellion, people shared a common moral language. What God declared to be right, they accepted as right. What He declared to be wrong, they accepted as wrong. They were united because they reflected God's moral image and measured life according to His unchanging standard of right and wrong.

The confusion at Babel, as I understand it, symbolizes something much deeper than different vocabularies. It represents humanity beginning to create its own definitions of right and wrong. Rather than submitting to God's moral standard, people increasingly justified their own desires, excused their own behavior, and developed competing systems of morality. Once that happened, humanity no longer spoke the same moral language.

I see the effects of that division everywhere today. People often speak the same words while meaning completely different things. Justice, freedom, love, truth, and even morality itself are defined differently depending upon the individual or the culture. It is as though people are speaking different languages even when using the same vocabulary. Those who share the

same understanding of right and wrong are, in a symbolic sense, speaking the same language.

As I have continued studying God's guidance, I have become convinced that lasting unity cannot be built merely by agreeing on words. It can only be restored by returning to God's unchanging standard of right and wrong. When humanity once again learns to speak that common moral language, many of the divisions that separate us begin to lose their power.

This understanding also prepared me to look beyond the outward divisions that humanity creates and to begin seeing people in a different way. Rather than defining individuals primarily by race, nationality, religion, or culture, I came to understand that God first looks at something much deeper—the intentions of the heart and the character a person develops. That realization naturally led me to the next symbolic lesson about humanity.

Section 4. Humanity

As I continued reflecting on the symbolic language of Scripture, I began to understand humanity differently.

One of the most familiar teachings of Scripture is that God judges people by the intentions of their hearts. As I reflected on this, I found myself asking another question: If God looks first at our intentions, what kinds of intentions does He see?

Society classifies people in countless ways. We divide ourselves by race, nationality, religion, culture, political affiliation, education, wealth, and social status. Yet as I reflected on God's guidance, I found myself reducing all of these distinctions to their simplest form. I came to believe that God first looks beyond every outward label and sees something much deeper—the intentions of the heart.

This led me to understand that, at the most fundamental level, humanity consists of two kinds of people: the people of good intentions and the people of bad intentions. These two groups exist within every race, nation, religion, and culture. Good intentions are not limited to one people, nor are bad intentions.

The People of Good Intentions: The people of good intentions sincerely desire to do what is right before God. They seek His guidance, strive to obey His teachings, and measure their lives by His understanding of right and wrong. They are not perfect people, but when they fail, they are willing to repent, seek God's forgiveness, and continue growing in righteousness.

As I reflected on the story of Cain and Abel, I came to understand Abel as symbolizing the people of good intentions. Abel reminds us that righteousness begins with a sincere desire to please God and to live according to His moral image rather than our own desires.

The People of Bad Intentions: The people of bad intentions knowingly reject God's authority by creating their own standards of right and wrong. Rather than acknowledging their wrongdoing, they justify it. Instead of repentance, they excuse themselves and often persuade others to accept their reasoning. Their actions are driven more by pride, jealousy, selfish ambition, and personal desire than by submission to God's guidance.

In the symbolic language of Scripture, I came to understand Cain as representing the people of bad intentions. Cain's story reminds us that evil does not begin with violence. It begins when a person allows pride, envy, and self-justification to replace humility and obedience to God. Such people not only harm others physically but often destroy the hopes, opportunities, and peace of those who sincerely seek to do good.

The more I reflected on this symbolism, the more I realized that Abel and Cain are not separated by race, nationality, or religion. They are separated by the condition of the heart. Within every race, nation, religion, political party, culture, and social class, there are people of good intentions and people of bad intentions. These two groups are not separated by the labels society gives them but by the intentions of their hearts and their willingness to follow God's understanding of right and wrong.

I also came to understand that evil rarely succeeds through the efforts of the people of bad intentions alone. It often prospers because the people of good intentions remain silent, excuse wrongdoing, or even support it because of personal loyalties. Someone may defend another simply because they belong to the same family, race, religion, political party, profession, or social group. Such loyalties can blind us to justice and allow wrongdoing to continue unchallenged.

This realization challenged me to examine my own loyalties. If I truly seek to follow God, then my first loyalty must always be to His understanding of right and wrong. Family, friendships, race, nationality, and every other human relationship are important, but none of them should lead me to defend injustice or excuse wrongdoing.

As I have continued studying God's guidance, I have become convinced that true righteousness requires the courage to stand with what is right even when it is difficult and to oppose what is wrong even when it involves those closest to us. God's standard of justice must always stand above our personal preferences and personal loyalties.

This understanding also changed the way I began to think about society itself. If individuals are shaped by the intentions of their hearts and by their understanding of right and wrong, then societies are likewise shaped by the moral principles they choose to uphold. That realization naturally led me to reflect on another symbolic story—Adam and Eve—not simply as individuals, but as symbols of the relationship between righteous leadership and the society it is called to protect.

Section 5. The Society

As I continued reflecting on the symbolic language of Scripture, I found myself asking another question: If Adam does not merely represent an individual, what might he symbolize?

As I reflected on the story, I came to understand Adam as symbolizing righteous government—the first governing authority established according to God’s understanding of right and wrong. Eve, in turn, came to represent the society entrusted to that government. Throughout history, societies have often been symbolized as a woman or a mother because they become the “womb of the mind,” shaping the moral character of the people they nurture.

Just as a loving mother seeks to nourish and develop the character of her children, a righteous government should protect and strengthen the moral health of its society. In this symbolism, Adam’s responsibility was to protect Eve from influences that would corrupt her character. When both remained obedient to God’s guidance, they experienced what the Quran describes as felicity—a state of complete peace, satisfaction, joy, and happiness of spirit and mind—symbolized by the Garden of Paradise.

The Tree of Good and Evil: As I reflected on the tree in the middle of the garden, I came to understand it as representing temptation itself—the countless opportunities through which human weakness can be exploited for personal gain. The fruit of this tree symbolizes every activity that encourages people to surrender to destructive desires rather than master them.

God permitted Adam and Eve to enjoy everything else within the garden, yet warned them not to eat from this one tree. To me, this symbolizes God’s warning that while governments may legitimately collect revenue from honest labor and lawful commerce, they should never profit from industries built upon exploiting human weakness.

Gambling, intoxicants, addictive substances, and other activities that encourage vice are examples of what I believe this tree represents. The specific forms of temptation may change from one generation to another, but the principle remains the same: a righteous government must never become financially dependent upon the very temptations it should be protecting its people from.

Adam’s Responsibility: The more I reflected on this symbolism, the more I came to believe that the first responsibility of a righteous government is not simply to maintain order but to protect the moral well-being of its people.

The day a government begins profiting from temptation is the day it begins abandoning that responsibility. Once it becomes financially dependent upon activities that exploit human weakness, it can no longer effectively protect society from the very things that provide its income. In that sense, Adam no longer protects Eve. Instead, he becomes dependent upon the tree from which God warned him not to eat.

The Serpent: As I reflected on the serpent, I came to understand it as symbolizing the voice that justifies temptation.

The serpent does not begin by persuading Adam, the government. Instead, it first persuades Eve, the society. It convinces people that temptation is harmless, beneficial, or even necessary. Once society accepts these ideas, society itself begins pressuring its government to legalize, regulate, and eventually profit from the very practices that were once rejected.

This pattern can be seen throughout history. Many activities that were once prohibited because they were recognized as harmful gradually became accepted after public opinion changed. Once governments began benefiting financially from these activities, their ability to oppose them became increasingly difficult.

A Call to Reflection: As I continued reflecting on this story, I came to understand that God's warning to Adam remains as relevant today as it was in the beginning. A righteous government must never profit from human weakness. Its responsibility is to protect society, encourage what is right, and discourage what is harmful.

This understanding also reminded me that every society ultimately reflects the moral character of the people who sustain it. When people demand righteousness, governments are encouraged to uphold righteousness. When people embrace temptation, governments often follow.

This symbolic understanding also prepared me to consider another question. If governments and societies rise or fall according to their moral character, how does God raise individuals from even the lowest conditions to restore what has been lost? That question led me to another symbolic lesson—the people of the dust.

Section 6. The People of the Dust

As I continued reflecting on the symbolic language of Scripture, another passage began to take on a deeper meaning for me. In Genesis, we are told that there was no man to till the ground, so God caused a mist to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. Then God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

As I reflected on this passage, I asked myself the same question I had been asking throughout this chapter: Are we still speaking symbolically about “man” as the moral mind, or has the story suddenly shifted to the physical man, Adam? I came to believe that the symbolism continues.

The People of the Wind: As I reflected on the natural elements God repeatedly uses throughout Scripture, I came to understand that they also represent different kinds of people.

The people of the wind are driven primarily by emotion. Like the wind itself, they constantly change direction according to whatever feels good at the moment. They seldom stop to ask whether their actions are right or wrong. Instead, they are carried along by trends, emotions, public opinion, and passing desires.

The People of Fire: The people of fire are consumed by their own desires and passions. Like fire, they often appear attractive and captivating, drawing others toward them. Yet when left uncontrolled, they destroy everything they consume. Pride, greed, lust, jealousy, and selfish ambition become the fuel that keeps their fire burning while leaving destruction behind.

The People of Water: The people of water seek God's guidance and continually examine themselves according to His understanding of right and wrong. Like pure water, they cleanse rather than corrupt. They constantly ask themselves whether their thoughts, words, and actions please God. This continual self-examination keeps their morals flowing, preventing them from becoming stagnant or polluted.

Just as water extinguishes fire, people whose lives are guided by God's righteousness have the ability to calm destructive passions and confront wrongdoing with truth, wisdom, and compassion. Rather than destroying others, they seek to restore them by appealing to the moral understanding God has placed within every human heart.

The People of the Dust: As I reflected further, I came to understand that the people of the dust symbolize those whom society considers insignificant, forgotten, or without value. Like dust scattered across the ground, they are often ignored, overlooked, and carried about by the influences surrounding them.

When the people of the wind sweep through society, they carry the dust in every direction. When the wind stops, the dust simply settles once again, unable to rise on its own.

This symbolism helped me understand why Genesis first speaks of watering the earth before God forms man from the dust. Before new life could emerge, the ground first had to receive water.

Earlier in this chapter, I came to understand water as symbolizing God's moral guidance. When that water became stagnant, society also became stagnant. But when God restored the flow of His moral truth, the water once again brought life to the earth.

As I reflected on this symbolism, I came to believe that God did not begin restoring humanity by choosing the powerful, the wealthy, or the influential. Instead, He often raised people whom the world considered insignificant. Through His guidance, He transformed the people of the dust into people who reflected His image of right and wrong.

Even Jesus declared that he was the light of the world while he was among the people. God's light restored the waters of moral understanding, and those living waters nourished the people of the dust. From those whom society considered worthless, God raised men and women who stood for justice, defended the oppressed, encouraged what is right, and forbade what is wrong. In doing so, they became living examples of His moral image.

To me, this demonstrates one of God's greatest lessons: He is not limited by the way the world values people. Those whom society overlooks, God is able to transform into instruments of His righteousness.

History repeatedly reminds us that whenever individuals or nations become proud and forget the God who raised them, they risk returning to the dust from which they came. But when they remain humble and continue walking in God's guidance, they become living testimony to His power to restore what the world believed could never be restored.

This symbolic understanding also helped me see that God's work of restoration always begins with transformed people before it transforms entire societies. When enough people allow God's light to restore their moral understanding, they become the foundation upon which a righteous society can once again be built. That realization naturally led me to my final reflection on reclaiming society through God's guidance.

Section 7. Reclaiming Society Through God's Guidance

As I look back on the symbolic lessons shared throughout this chapter, I believe they all point toward one central truth: God has never stopped teaching humanity the distinction between right and wrong. His lessons are woven throughout both His creation and the symbolic language of Scripture, waiting for those who sincerely seek His guidance.

Throughout this chapter, I have shared the understanding that God has gradually developed in me through years of study, prayer, and reflection. As I came to understand these symbols, I began to see that they are not isolated stories about ancient people. Together, they reveal God's method of restoring what humanity has lost.

I came to understand that restoring society does not begin with changing governments, institutions, or laws. It begins by restoring the meaning of morality itself. Once we again understand the distinction between right and wrong according to God's guidance, we begin recovering the common moral language that humanity lost. As that understanding grows, we begin to see people not through the divisions created by race, nationality, religion, or political affiliation, but through the intentions of their hearts. From there, we begin to understand the true purpose of righteous government, the importance of protecting society from moral corruption, and the power of God to raise humble people to become instruments of His righteousness.

Looking back, I now see each of these symbolic lessons as another step upward. Every step carries us a little farther out of the darkness of moral ignorance and a little closer to the light of God's moral intelligence. The journey begins by asking what is right and what is wrong, but it does not end there. It continues until God's light begins transforming the way we understand

ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

As I reflected on this chapter, I also came to realize that one of humanity's greatest losses has been the corruption of the very meaning of morality. When the distinction between right and wrong becomes whatever an individual, a culture, or a society chooses it to be, moral intelligence gradually disappears. Once that foundation is lost, individuals, families, governments, and entire civilizations lose their ability to correct themselves because they no longer share a common standard by which to judge their thoughts and actions.

For this reason, I believe restoring the true meaning of morals is one of the greatest responsibilities of every believer. It is not enough to condemn the darkness around us. We must first allow God's light to restore our own understanding of right and wrong. Only then can we help restore our families, our communities, and our societies.

My purpose in sharing these symbolic interpretations is not to claim that they are the only way these stories may be understood. They represent the light of understanding that I believe God has graciously given me during my own journey. He may guide you to understand these same stories differently, for God promises to give every sincere believer light to walk his own path. My hope is not that you see these stories through my eyes, but that God opens your eyes as He continues to guide you in your own journey toward Him.

If these reflections encourage you to look beyond the surface of Scripture, to seek God's guidance personally, and to allow His light to restore your understanding of right and wrong, then this chapter will have fulfilled its purpose. Every step we take toward God's truth leaves a little more darkness behind and brings us a little closer to righteousness, peace, and felicity that He has intended for humanity from the beginning.

Chapter 5

Is Christianity Polytheism or Monotheism?

Obeying God's Judgment

Section 1. Who Was Jesus?

As I reached this point in my journey, I found myself facing one of the most important questions in all of religion:

Who was Jesus? For many Christians, Jesus is the Son of God and the central figure of their faith. For those who follow the Quran, however, Jesus is honored as one of God's greatest prophets but is never regarded as divine. This difference has become one of the greatest divisions among the people who all look to Abraham as their father in faith.

As I reflected on this question, I realized it is much more than a theological disagreement.

It is one of the greatest obstacles preventing the followers of Abraham from becoming the united community of believers that God intended them to be.

Throughout this book, I have shared my understanding that God calls believers to remove divisions rather than create them. I have also come to believe that true unity can never be built upon confusion about the nature of God Himself. If we sincerely desire to restore the faith of Abraham, then we must be willing to examine every belief honestly and seek God's guidance above inherited traditions.

Abraham is honored by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike as a man who devoted himself completely to the worship of one God. Yet today, the descendants of Abraham remain divided over one of the most fundamental questions of faith: Who was Jesus?

As I continued studying the Quran, I came to understand that it presents Jesus with the greatest respect while preserving the absolute oneness of God. Jesus is described as the Messiah, born miraculously to the Virgin Mary, strengthened by God's Spirit, and sent as one of His greatest messengers. Yet throughout the Quran, he remains a servant and prophet of God, calling people to worship the Creator rather than himself.

This understanding led me to another realization. The question is not whether Jesus deserves honor. The Quran gives him extraordinary honor. The question is whether honoring Jesus requires worshiping him as God or the Son of God.

For me, the answer lies in returning to the example of Abraham. Abraham's faith was founded upon the worship of God alone, without partners, intermediaries, or divisions. I believe the Quran calls believers back to that same pure monotheism, seeing Jesus not as a rival to God but as one of the greatest

examples of complete submission to God's will.

Whether one ultimately accepts or rejects this understanding, I believe every sincere believer should be willing to examine it honestly. The divisions surrounding Jesus have lasted for centuries and continue to separate people who claim to worship the same Creator. If humanity truly desires the unity that God calls us to, then this question cannot simply be ignored.

The purpose of sharing my understanding is not to diminish Jesus but rather to honor him in the way I believe the Quran honors him: as one of God's greatest prophets, whose life continually pointed people toward the worship of God alone.

The Quran Bears Witness

Quran 9:30 The Jews call Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouths; in this, they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the truth!

Quran 4:171 O people of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of God aught but truth. Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was no more than an Apostle of God and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him; so, believe in God and His Apostles. Say not "Trinity": desist, it will be better for you: for God is One God: glory be to him: for Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of affairs.

Quran 5:17 In blasphemy indeed are those that say that God is Christ, the son of Mary. Say: "Who then has the least power against God if His Will were to destroy Christ, the son of Mary, his mother, and everyone that is on the earth? For to God belong the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is between. He creates what He pleases. For God has power over all things."

Quran 10:68 They say, "God has begotten a son!" Glory be to Him! He is self-sufficient! His are all things in the heavens and on earth! No warrant has you for this! You say about God what ye know not?

Section 2. Obeying God's Judgment

After reflecting on who I believe Jesus was according to the Quran, I found myself asking another important question: If God has already revealed His judgment concerning this matter, what is the responsibility of the believer?

Throughout this book, I have shared my understanding that sincere believers are not only called to seek God's guidance but also to obey it. The Quran repeatedly commands believers to judge according to the light of understanding that God has revealed. Knowing God's guidance is not enough. Believers are called to live by it.

As I continued studying the Quran, I was struck by God's response to one of the greatest religious disagreements in history: Is Jesus the Son of God, or is he one of God's prophets? After explaining that Jesus was created by God's command just as Adam was, God immediately gives believers His judgment concerning how this disagreement is to be resolved.

Rather than allowing the debate to continue indefinitely, He gives a direct command that those who sincerely believe in Him are expected to obey.

The Quran says:

“If anyone disputes in this matter with you after the knowledge that has come to you, say: Come! Let us gather together our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves. Then let us earnestly pray and invoke God’s curse upon those who are lying.”

As I reflected on this passage, I came to understand that God Himself is offering a way to resolve this dispute. Rather than allowing generations of believers to remain divided by endless arguments, He instructs those who sincerely believe they possess the truth to place the matter before Him and allow Him to judge between them.

This instruction demonstrates complete confidence in God’s justice. It acknowledges that while human beings may disagree, God knows perfectly who speaks the truth. Instead of relying upon human power, persuasion, or hostility, believers are instructed to trust God’s judgment completely.

To me, this instruction also teaches an important lesson about obedience. Throughout the Quran, God repeatedly commands believers to judge according to His guidance. Here, He goes one step further by showing believers how He wants this particular disagreement to be addressed. The responsibility of the believer, therefore, is not merely to admire God’s wisdom but to obey His instruction.

As I reflected on this passage, I also found myself asking another question.

If God has already shown believers how this dispute should be addressed, why has it remained unresolved for more than fourteen centuries?

I came to believe that one reason is that believers have continued discussing the question without fully carrying out the action God Himself prescribed. Whether others agree with this conclusion or not, I believe every sincere believer should carefully consider God's instruction and ask whether obedience requires more than simply discussing it.

The question, then, is no longer whether God has provided guidance. The question is whether those who sincerely believe in Him are willing to obey the guidance He has already given.

Section 3. The Final Step

As I bring this book to a close, I find myself reflecting on where this journey began.

At the beginning of this book, I introduced what I learned years ago as the Three Steps to a Problem.

The first step is to identify the problem.

The second step is to estimate the situation.

The third step is to take action.

Without that final step, the problem remains and often grows worse.

Throughout this book, I have tried to identify the obstacles that prevent humanity from understanding God as He intended. I have shared the understanding that God has graciously developed in me through years of study, prayer, and reflection. Whether you ultimately agree with my conclusions or not, I hope this journey has encouraged you to seek God's guidance personally rather than simply inherit the understanding of others.

As I look back over the path we have climbed together, I believe one lesson stands above all the others.

If we recognize division but do nothing, division continues.

If we understand morality but do not practice it, society continues to decline.

If we understand God's guidance but refuse to obey it, the problem remains unresolved.

If we seek God's light but refuse to walk in it, we remain in darkness.

If we understand the common language of right and wrong but continue speaking the language of division, humanity remains divided.

If we recognize the people of good intentions and the people of bad intentions but continue supporting wrongdoing because of race, religion, politics, or personal loyalty, injustice continues to flourish.

If we understand God's purpose for society but allow governments to profit from human weakness, society continues to decline.

And if God has shown believers how He commands them to address one of the greatest religious disagreements in history, yet they refuse to obey His instruction, then we should not be surprised that this division has remained unresolved for more than fourteen centuries.

Quran 6: 159 Says

As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.

Yet today, most religious people belong to one sect or another, including many who profess to follow the Quran. This reality demonstrates that understanding God's instruction and obeying it are not always the same thing.

Throughout this journey, I have come to believe that God does not ask us merely to understand His guidance. He asks us to obey it.

I do not expect every reader to agree with every conclusion I have reached. In fact, throughout this book I have repeatedly encouraged you to seek God's guidance for yourself, because I believe He gives every sincere believer light to walk his own path. My prayer is not that you simply accept my understanding,

but that God blesses you with your own understanding as you continue seeking Him with sincerity.

If this book has accomplished anything, I hope it has encouraged you to ask difficult questions, to examine inherited beliefs honestly, and to trust God enough to follow His guidance wherever it may lead. The journey toward God is not completed by gaining knowledge alone. It is completed by living according to the truth that He reveals.

The stairway ends here, but the journey with God does not.

May He continue to guide us all into greater understanding, greater righteousness, and greater unity as we seek to worship Him alone and walk in the light that He has graciously given each of us.

For every believer, this is the final step—and the beginning of the journey that follows.

O God, please continue to guide us to the Straight Path, increase us in understanding, strengthen us in righteousness, unite us in what is true, and forgive us when we fall short. Amen.

Quran 31:27 And if all the trees on earth were pens and the sea, with seven more seas added to it, were ink, the Words of God would not be exhausted. Indeed, God is Almighty, All-Wise.

Everything you've just read is still only a drop from an infinite ocean of God's knowledge. Continue learning, and may God bless you with your own light of understanding and moral intelligence so that you may think and judge for yourself according to His guidance.

Continue the Journey

If this book has encouraged you to seek God through understanding, I invite you to continue the journey.

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