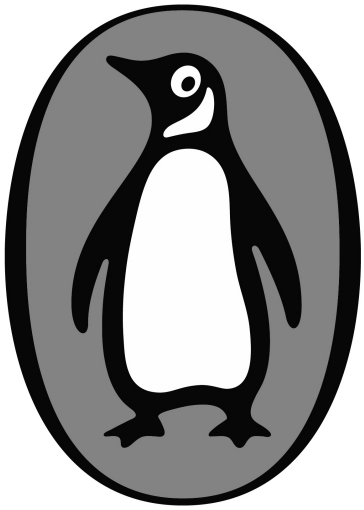
THE *SUNDAY TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR
OF *RAMADAN REFLECTIONS*

The Power of Du'a

'Empowering...of great benefit to those who want their doors flung open by Allah'
Mufti Menk

Aliyah Umm Raiyaan



About the Author



Aliyah Umm Raiyaan reverted to Islam in 1999 as a young woman and has been involved in UK dawah for over twenty years. In 2010, she founded Solace UK, a charity that helps women who have reverted to Islam and find themselves in difficulty. In 2019, she launched a YouTube show called Honest Tea Talk, which brought unscripted conversations to the table about raw, unspoken topics related to the Muslim community. She continues to devote her time to helping women achieve their full potential while emphasising the importance of developing a personal and close relationship with Allah. She lives in East London with her family. She is the author of the *Sunday Times* bestseller, *Ramadan Reflections*.

Aliyah Umm Raiyaan

THE POWER OF DU'A



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For my dearest readers, I make this du’a for you: May this book be a means of you turning to Allah in du’a and, in turn, Him Turning Lovingly and Mercifully towards you. Ameen.

Introduction

Dearest reader, although your eyes are reading these words, I ask that you grant me your heart's attention. You may be wondering why I have started this introduction with 'Dearest reader'. Whether I know you or not, it is because introductions are everything, as you will come to see. I want you to understand that you are a reader who is dear to me, regardless of our differences in gender, race, age and even religion. You are dear to me because you and I are more similar than you realise. How? Because we are trying to make sense of this journey called life, and we're doing the best that we can to navigate our way through.

Sometimes it's easy. And sometimes it can be hard – really hard. There are challenges to overcome. There are goals to achieve. There is pain and there is ease. There is darkness and light. There are moments when we feel weak and there are moments when we feel so strong that we can take on the world. And this is why I address you as 'dearest reader', now and throughout this entire book. Because I know, I understand and I journey with you.

I am a writer who wishes to walk by your side as you discover the treasures that await you through the practice of du'a – personal supplication that is so much more than just personal prayer. There are dimensions and depths to du'a that lead a soul to transform, the scales in the next life to tip massively in favour of ajr (reward) and the soul to relax in profound feelings of belonging, as your heart feels at home, settling in closeness to Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala – Glorious and Most High is He.

Dear reader, as you read this book, expect depth and compassion, and to discover a fresh meaning to personal supplication to the Lord of the Worlds. Expect the possibility of transformation in yourself, ease in your difficulties, dreams that become reality and a spiritually deeper relationship with Him ('azza wa jal – Glory be to Him).

The Power of Du'a is a powerful yet compassionate framework designed to introduce you to du'a as never before. To transform your du'a – showing you how and why du'a needs to be an absolute priority in your life. Divided into four parts, *The Power of Du'a* takes you on a journey of preparation of your heart before you make du'a, of the refinement of what to say and how you say it as you call upon Him ('azza wa jal) and of training yourself to trust in the best response of Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) to your du'a.

In each chapter, I introduce you to the theme of that chapter, followed by a real-life du'a story about someone I know. I then take you by the hand and help you gently develop your du'a practice through understanding and guidance. And then, my dear reader, I extend an invitation, through practical steps, to take all that your heart and mind has learned and been moved by, and to apply this to your own du'a practice and life. For the practical elements of this book towards the end of each chapter, you may want to treat yourself to a lovely journal!

The 'Allah, Transform My Du'a' section at the very end of each chapter offers an example of a du'a to the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, in which you beseech Him to help you transform your du'a. You may use this du'a as it is presented or tweak it to align with the changes you have already made or need to make to your own du'a practice.

Islamic terminology has been translated in the first instance and there is a glossary to help you at the end of the book. On your first reading of *The Power of Du'a*, I strongly encourage you to read the chapters in chronological order. This is because before you can speak to Allah, your heart must first speak. And before you can 'see' the answer to your du'a, you need to understand Who it is you are asking, and how He responds. Afterwards, on any subsequent reading, you may dip in and out as you please. But please trust me, this is a book to read in order first, to truly build upon your previous learnings. This means that by the end, you will have a full, comprehensive approach to preparing for du'a, making it, navigating the response and, I hope, living with it as your most powerful tool in this life.

In his book *Sayed Al-Khater*, the Islamic scholar Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote:

> Some of the scholars used to remind people that the Prophet (ﷺ peace and blessings be upon him) said: ‘Supplication is worship’, and I say, ‘Worship is supplication.’

I couldn’t agree more. Du’a is the articulation of your needs, but through the Generosity of Allah, it becomes worship, leading you to great reward and a nearness to Him like no other. One of my favourite writers, the scholar Ibn al-Qayyim, penned something that I hope summarises your experience of du’a once you finish reading this book. In *Madaarij As-Salikeen*, he notes:

> It is possible that a person has a need for something, so he earnestly prays and requests Allah for it, until the sweetness of asking and imploring Allah is opened for him. So he enjoys being humbled before Him, and trying to draw closer to Him, using His Names and Attributes, and his heart becomes void of everything besides Him … So it is possible that what good has come about because of this state of his is even greater … than his actual need … to such an extent that he wishes to continue in this state, and prefers it over the actual fulfilment of his need.
>
> So his happiness due to this state is greater than the happiness he would achieve had his need actually been fulfilled.

Dearest reader, by Allah, for Allah and with Allah, it is time to take what you need and want to your Lord and connect with Him (‘azza wa jal) through du’a.

Aliyah Umm Raiyaan

Part 1:

DU'A OF NEED AND WANT

Dear reader, there are moments in your life where you will find yourself at an all-time low, as a servant of Allah in need.

There are moments in your life where you will find yourself in a better place, where you can dream as a servant in want.

I invite you to embark upon the beginning of this journey of du'a discovery by introducing you to the One to whom you are making du'a.

I introduce you to du'a through knowing your Lord.

1

Du’a is Relationship

Allah (‘azza wa jal) says:

‘If My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me; I am very close, answering the caller (who invokes Me).’

Surah Baqarah 2:186

In the midst of writing this book, I was blessed with the invitation to perform Umrah, the non-obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah, with my children. It was a very special trip as this would be the first time their eyes beheld the Kabah – the House of Allah situated in Islam’s holiest site. We arrived in the holy city of Makkah, performed Umrah and remained in the blessed city for five nights. I hadn’t booked the hotel for the next leg of our trip, the city of Madinah, as a family friend who ran a travel agency specialising in Umrah packages assured us he could secure a hotel booking at cost price. But as we neared the end of our time in Makkah, calls and messages to this family friend went unanswered. When we finally managed to get through to him, he informed us that he had not been able to reach his own contact at the hotel.

On our final night in Makkah, and with the train booked to take us to Madinah the next day, I began to panic. I felt frustrated and let down, as this booking should have been finalised weeks earlier. Adding to my rising panic, other hotels close to the Prophet Muhammad’s Mosque, which is the sole reason pilgrims visit Madinah, were either fully booked or did not even answer their reservation lines!

As this was my children's first visit to Madinah, I wanted to provide them with the ease and luxury of staying in a hotel a stone's throw away from the Prophet's Mosque. I could feel angry tears form in my eyes and hastily voiced my frustration to my children. My daughter looked at me and said, 'Don't worry, Ummi. There's a reason for all of this. Allah will look after us and open up a way.'

Calm descended as I processed the words my soul needed to hear. I felt embarrassed that I hadn't had the instant tawakkul (reliance upon Allah) that my daughter had displayed. Straightening my slumped shoulders, I turned to my children and said, 'Allah will look after us! How can He not? The early Muslims left Makkah with nowhere to go for His Sake. Allah looked after them through the kindness and generosity of the Ansar (the supporters from Madinah). We're leaving Makkah and travelling to Madinah with nowhere to stay, and we are here in these blessed lands purely for His Sake. There is no way Allah will let us down.'

I then turned to Allah and made a silent du'a: 'Allah, I'm here for You. I want ease for my children. You are the same Lord who looked after the early Muslims who had nowhere to go. You are the same Lord who will provide for us. I place my trust in You. Provide us with a hotel that is close to the Prophet's (ﷺ peace and blessings be upon him) Mosque. I know and trust You will provide the absolute best for us.'

I decided to take to heart a lesson from an incident narrated by one of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), which states:

> Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: a man said, 'O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allah?' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Tie her and trust in Allah.'
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

And so, with our baggage stored securely in the luggage compartment, on the train to Madinah, we frantically began to 'tie our camel' and message friends, asking them if they knew of any hotels close to Masjid an-Nabawi – the Prophet's Mosque. They all came back saying everything was fully booked. We began to look at Airbnbs, roughly a twenty-minute walk from

the Prophet's Mosque. In the forecast 46°C heat, I could not imagine us walking without shade to and from the mosque.

After a while, we were sent a link to a hotel that had space and which also fell within our budget. I googled the name, clicked on Maps and saw that it was a fifteen-minute walk from the mosque – five minutes fewer than to the Airbnbs. With only an hour to go until our arrival in Madinah, and fearful that the available rooms would be taken by someone else, I placed my trust in Allah and booked them. Despite the dreaded walk we would have to take in the sweltering heat, I felt an instant sense of relief that we would be okay.

Stepping out of the air-conditioned station at Madinah into the brutal afternoon sun, I started to feel anxious again about how we were going to manage the numerous walks between the hotel and the Prophet's Mosque, especially as we wanted to pray as many prayers as we could within its vicinity, hungry for the multiplied reward. Jumping into a taxi, I kept reminding myself that Allah never lets down those who trust in Him. We were His servants travelling to the peace and security the early Muslims found in Madinah.

I arrived at the hotel's reception desk. After optimistically checking whether Google Maps might be off by a few crucial minutes – anything to shave off some of the dreaded walk under the Saudi Arabian sun – I asked the receptionist how long the walk actually was. She looked at me with furrowed brows, confused by my question, then pointed to the opposite entrance and said, 'It's right there. Literally a couple of minutes away.'

My eyes followed the direction of her finger and lo and behold, the Prophet's Mosque was right in front of the hotel entrance! In complete disbelief, I held up my phone for the receptionist to see the distance that Google Maps had shown me. She smiled and said, 'Oh, yes – for some reason, many customers have told us Google Maps show our hotel to be further away than it is.' She returned to her computer to complete our check-in. In slight shock, I looked away and gazed out at the gigantic umbrellas that Masjid an-Nabawi is renowned for. The receptionist interrupted my thoughts. 'Madam,' she said, 'I have upgraded your rooms free of charge. Your rooms are now larger and have a view of Masjid an-Nabawi. Enjoy your stay.'

My eyes began to fill with tears. In that moment, I knew my Lord had not only answered my du'a, but in the beautiful way that He is Al-Kareem, The Most Generous, He had given me more and better than what I had asked for. Such is Allah.

A week after returning to the UK from our Umrah trip, I attended an Islamic Qur'an reading in East London Mosque where I bumped into a friend.

'Aliyah, how was Umrah?' she asked, hugging me. I told her how easy and cost-effective it was to book one's Umrah without an agency – and then about our experience with the Madinah hotel. She listened to me with her eyes wide open, inspired by my du'a story; the sparkle of yearning to converse with her Lord and make du'a for all that her heart wanted was evident in her eyes. Then suddenly there was a shift. The pupils of her eyes contracted.

'Subhana'Allah [how free of any imperfection is Allah]!' she exclaimed. 'As an ummah [Islamic community], we've lost our understanding of what du'a is and how powerful it can be in our lives. We feel we can only make du'a at certain times and in certain places. But du'a can be made at any time. It doesn't need to be this long textbook script! Aliyah, we need to revive du'a in our lives! The community needs to know how amazing du'a is! We need to return to the understanding that du'a just needs to be heartfelt, specific and with a sound belief that Allah will respond in the absolute best way.'

I smiled and whispered, 'Don't tell anyone, but you know my second book—'

'Don't tell me it's about du'a!' she interrupted before I could finish my sentence.

'Yes, it's called *The Power of Du'a*,' I replied.

Dearest reader, du'a is often described as personal prayer. But I want you to know it is so much more than that. Du'a is a relationship between you and your Lord. It is personal communication with Allah that develops and nurtures the closest relationship you will ever experience in this dunya (the life of this world). It is you – in all the ways that you are limited, flawed and imperfect – calling upon The One who is Unlimited, with no flaws, Absolutely Perfect. It is you talking to Him, crying out to Him, complaining to Him and asking of Him all that your heart desires. It is you turning to

Him and telling Him what you need. It is the sharing of your concerns with Him, because you know He Listens Attentively. It is asking Him to show you the way when you feel lost. It is you journeying through this life, needing and hoping for His Guidance, Ease, Blessings and Overflowing Abundant Mercy.

If you have experienced this type of relationship, then you have been blessed with one of the most precious riches of this world. If you are yet to know this kind of relationship, then get ready to experience the closest, most soothing, most fulfilling relationship you will ever encounter. This is du'a, and this is what du'a can become for you. I am so excited for you. If you are questioning whether this is possible for you as you recount your sins and many imperfections, then read what I am about to share very carefully – because it applies to every single one of us …

Your Lord, Allah (‘azza wa jal) wants to have a relationship with you regardless. Yes! The Creator of all that exists wants to have a relationship with you! What is my proof? My proof lies in the fact that Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) revealed ninety-nine of His Names to you and did not place a condition that you needed to be free of sin to know Him. Your Lord did not keep Himself concealed. He revealed who He is and how He interacts with His servants – and that includes you!

Thinking of this in human terms, when we want people to know us, we share things about ourselves with them – our personality, our likes and dislikes, experiences, who we are and most definitely our name. What does this mean? It means that in Allah's revealing to you ninety-nine of His Names, He wants you to know Him deeply. Again, in human terms, we understand that it is only through knowing someone that we can build a relationship with that person.

My dearest reader, Allah (‘azza wa jal) wants you to know Him so that you may develop a close relationship with Him. He wants you to experience Him as you navigate the mountainous climb we call life. Allah has revealed Himself to you through His Names. And so du'a is your own human decision to invest in that relationship through interacting with His Names – developing your awareness of the One to whom you are speaking and building a foundation of faith of who He can become for you. This develops the closest bond with The Most Loving.

I invite you now to grab a cup of your favourite drink as I introduce you to du’a by deeply understanding who you are speaking to. Though Allah has ninety-nine Names and more, I will focus on only four that He chose to introduce to you simply and clearly, so they are easily accessible, as you will come to see. These Names are so special and so encompassing that your Lord has lovingly decreed that you be reminded of them every day – so that you may always remember who He is, can be and will be for you.

Allow me to introduce you to your Beloved.

2

Your Need, His Mercy

Allah (‘azza wa jal) says:

‘My Mercy encompasses everything …’

Surah Al-Araf 7:156

Any powerful speech recorded in the history of humankind has survived the ages because of those to whom the message was directed. Du’a is no different. The importance of du’a will only ever be realised when we know who we are addressing. It is my hope that you will move away from du’a that is scripted, dry and performed, and instead move towards du’a that is raw, human, heartfelt and impromptu, because your tongue has become so accustomed to move in communication with your Lord. I hope, by Allah’s Permission, that you realise du’a can be made in moments of joy and sadness; in moments of strength as well as when you feel weak; in moments where you feel both close and distant from your Rabb.

There is no better way to introduce you to Allah than the way He has introduced Himself through His Own Words. His Words have been preserved in the Qur’an (the Holy Book of Allah) for over 1,400 years, when they were first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the cave of Hira. Allah (‘azza wa jal) has made this easy to discover. We need not read far into His Book. In fact, opening the Qur’an at the very first page of the very first chapter, we find the most beautiful introduction to the Lord of the Worlds. It is in none other than Surah Fatiha, the chapter we coincidentally must recite in every raka’ah (unit of prayer) – a condition for

its validity. I smile at this. It is almost as though Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) wants to consistently remind us of who He is, knowing that human nature is to forget, because He really does want us to have an exceptionally close relationship with Him.

So many lessons are taken from this first chapter of the Qur'an – which is in fact a du'a in and of itself. Aside from discovering the Names and Attributes of our Creator, we learn about the power of du'a and the beautiful relationship that ensues between servant and Lord.

In a hadith (narration), it is said:

> The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Allah Almighty said: I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.' When the servant says: 'All praise is due to Allah the Lord of the worlds', Allah says: 'My servant has praised Me.' When he says: 'The Gracious, The Merciful', Allah says: 'My servant has exalted Me.' When he says: 'The Master of the Day of Judgement', Allah says: 'My servant has glorified Me and My servant has submitted to Me.' When he says: 'You alone we worship, You alone we ask for help', Allah says: 'This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for.' When he says, 'Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favoured, not those who went astray', Allah says: 'This is for My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for.'
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

My dearest reader, on the first page of the Qur'an, in Surah Fatiha, Allah introduces us to four of His Names: Rabb (The Lord), Ar-Rahmaan (The Most Merciful), Ar-Raheem (The Especially Merciful) and Al-Malik (The Owner of all things). These four names were placed strategically at the beginning of the Qur'an and in the prayer by an intentional Creator.

As you read on, you will understand that your Lord made these names easily known to every human being regardless of their gender, age, race, status and intellect from a place of Affection and Love.

The first time I read the Qur'an was as a non-Muslim teenager. It was a translation of the Qur'an that also included the transliteration. I remember opening the Holy Book carefully to the very first page and instead of reading the English translation, with finger placed firmly under the transliteration, I attempted to read what I knew was the pronunciation of the Arabic words. Chapter 1, verse 1 of the Qur'an states 'Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem', which is translated as 'In the name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Especially Merciful.' This was my first introduction to God as revealed in the Islamic faith. Reading this first verse of the Qur'an was an unforgettable moment. It felt as though I was engaging with a sacred description of The Most High. These were not merely words. They were the most important adjectives I would come to know – ones that required me to hold them close in reverence and respect.

In that precise moment of reciting the Qur'an for the first time, I was transported to my childhood. There were memories of extra-curricular activities – piano, swimming and African dance lessons. My mother worked very hard to provide my younger brother and me with experiences she never had. She was a mother who went the extra mile, but she was terribly unhappy in her marriage to my father. Perhaps it was the differences in culture and expectations – she a fiery and passionate Sicilian woman and he a super-strict Nigerian man. My young eyes and ears sadly witnessed many disagreements, arguments and fights. As a little girl, I often tried to silence the noise by taking myself to the living room window of our two-bedroom flat on the second floor of a council estate in Poplar, East London.

Flicking the curtain netting over my shoulders, I would lean my arms on the windowsill and stare into one of my favourite spots. On the ground floor directly opposite was an extremely large shipping container that acted as a temporary mosque. I found it fascinating as I watched Bangladeshi men walk towards the door, flick their flip-flops off their feet and enter. Resting my head on my folded arms, I could see into the entrance of this makeshift mosque – a brightly carpeted room. I observed how the men would bow and prostrate themselves as they prayed. When they finished their prayers, they searched for their flip-flops amongst the small hill that had formed, and then walked back into the estate, and I would also retreat back to my bedroom. It was my aim as a child to catch this moment as much as I could, knowing this act of worship was repeated several times a day.

One day, when I was eight years old, my mother and father had one of their biggest fights. I ran to my bedroom, pausing only to grab my mother's shawl from her room. As I heard shouting and banging, I shut my bedroom door and threw the shawl outspread onto the ground. With tears falling down my cheeks, I fell onto the shawl and placed my head on the ground – imitating the prayer that I so loved to observe. In that very position, I cried out and said, 'God, make them stop! I need them to stop! Give us peace!' I kept repeating this as the shawl became wet with my tears. I felt that this position, though foreign to me personally, was the closest I could ever be to God and that right there at that precise moment, He heard me, and that He would respond. Even though this childhood memory faded over time, when I saw the transliteration and translation of the first verse of Surah Fatiha in front of me, I became aware that the memory still touched a deep place within my heart. This was a God who was introducing Himself to me as One who would be Kind, Compassionate and Merciful in all my moments of vulnerability.

Dearest reader, I am sure there have been times when you have felt completely out of your depth – needing relief, wanting ease, desperate to feel His Merciful Embrace. As I shared in my previous book, *Ramadan Reflections*, you are always in one of three states: you were either previously tested with a difficulty, or you are being tested now, or you will be tested in the future. And because we are always in one of these three states, we are always in need of Allah. We are in need of Him to help us cope as we stand in the eye of a storm, tired, battered by strong winds – not knowing how we'll ever emerge whole. We are in need of Him to cope with its aftermath as we recover and gather ourselves to go forward once again. And we are in need of Him to strengthen and fortify ourselves as we prepare for the next one.

Muslim or non-Muslim, young or old, man or woman, we are all human beings who experience need. It is in our nature to need, to reach out for help and to lean upon others. In the fast-paced nature of moving between all three states in the course of life – whether when studying, working, being in relationships with family and friends, alternating between sickness and good health, experiencing such joy you laugh so hard that your stomach hurts, or heartbreaking sadness that makes you cry so hard that your eyes feel old and worn – Allah knows we don't have time to figure out which of

His ninety-nine Names is best to call upon. In moments of deep internal turmoil where we are brought to our knees, He has revealed to us the only Names we will ever require in our times of need.

Ar-Rahmaan is The All-Encompassing One, Absolutely Full of Mercy and Most Definitely Merciful. His Mercy is not limited to a time, place or type of creation. It touches everything and everyone, and is immediate. As if this was not enough, in this first verse of the Qur'an, Allah couples Ar-Rahmaan with Ar-Raheem. Ar-Raheem is The One who is Especially Merciful to those who believe in Him. Your Lord knows, when in a storm, that you will feel disorientated, which will affect your capacity to feel and think clearly. So, through His Mercy and Love, He has reminded you of His Names Ar-Rahmaan and Ar-Raheem. You recite them at the beginning of every surah (chapter) with the exception of Surah Tawbah. You say them before you start anything. You include them in your salah (prayer) whenever you recite Surah Fatiha.

Allah could have chosen some of His other Names in all of these instances. But He chose Names which describe His Mercy.

It is narrated in a hadith qudsi – Allah's Words as shared by the Prophet (ﷺ) – that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Allah made mercy into one hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine parts with Himself and sent down one part to the Earth. From that one part, the creation is merciful to each other, such that a horse raises its hoof over its child for fear of trampling it.

In another narration, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Allah has kept ninety-nine parts of Mercy to show to His servants on the Day of Resurrection.

Sahih Bukhari and *Sahih Muslim*

Your Lord chose His Mercy, because He knows and fully understands that from the cradle until the grave, you will be in one of those three states that will always place you in a state of vulnerability and in need of Him. And He wishes for you to find Him to be Understanding, Affectionate, Tender

and Merciful. These constant reminders can only be from a Loving Lord who never wants you to forget that He is here for you through it all, and especially when things are hard, heavy, frustrating and confusing. He wants you to know that He sees that you chose to believe in Him, that you're sacrificing for His Sake, doing your best to be steadfast, falling and standing up again purely for Him. And He wants you to know that your efforts are not in vain. He is Ar-Raheem for you – Especially and Specifically Merciful to you. Allah is telling you, just as the manifestation of your absolute need of Him is to cry out to Him in du'a, that His manifestation of being a Lord who Hears and Responds is to do so with Unlimited Mercy, Understanding and Affection – all shown for you.

And how can He not? He cares for you through the days and nights when you are not calling out to Him. So imagine, then, the way Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem deals with you when you do.

And when you do, distraught from a previous storm, drenched and dishevelled as you stand within a current storm or apprehensive about a storm that is brewing, He wants you to arrive at the door of du'a knowing with certainty that His Merciful Embrace awaits you. Allah's constant reminders of His Mercy are given, because He wants your heart to focus on this throughout the many times of need you will experience in your life. Through this focus, Ar-Rahmaan also wants you to perceive the events that led to your state of need as coming from His Abundant and Overflowing Love and Compassion. He wants you to see that though the rain is heavy, and the winds are fierce, by focusing on His Mercy, your storm was decreed not from His Wrath but from Divine Love – clearing and washing away that which is no longer needed, so that you may grow.

The storms in your life are in fact Him watering you – bringing you to true life and faith. The human eye often focuses on the apparent downpour and destruction a storm creates, but a shift in focus towards His Mercy means the eyes of the soul find the good in the storm. Allah wants you to trust Him and all the ways He is Merciful, even if it does not make sense at the time. When we look back at the life of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), we find trials and difficulties that led him to experience many moments of deep need. In the forty years of his life prior to receiving revelation, he was born to a mother who was a widow. He lost his mother at

the delicate age of six. His grandfather, who became his guardian, died two years later. He was first a shepherd and then went into business, where he worked for a rich businesswoman, Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her), who became his beloved wife. He buried his son who died as an infant. And all the while, he was witnessing the jahiliyyah (life of ignorance before revelation) prevalent in Makkah, which went against the fitrah (natural inclination) of his soul.

All of these trials of dire need did not make sense at the time. But they were preparing him for a turning point in his life: prophethood. He (ﷺ) was met with nothing but Allah's Mercy.

Dear reader, this is the same Lord you are calling out to in du'a during your own times of need. This is the One with whom you are in relationship. Allow this knowledge to shape the way you speak to your Lord. For you, too, with all your challenges, difficulties and needs, will be met with His Overflowing Mercy.

3

Your Dreams, His Ability

When the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received revelation from the Angel Jibreel in the cave of Hira, the first-ever words Allah revealed to him (ﷺ) were:

‘Iqra bismi rabbikal ladhee khalaq.’

Surah Al-’Alaq 96:1

which translates as: ‘Read in the name of Your Lord who created.’

Allah introduced Himself to the Prophet (ﷺ) through the name Rabb, which is also the third name we are introduced to in Surah Fatiha. After all the endless difficulties the Prophet (ﷺ) endured, Allah informed him that He was ‘Rabbika’ – ‘Your Lord’. Allah lovingly assured him that he was never alone. He had a Lord who has been there this whole time – a Lord who Owns absolutely everything, including him and his life. At this critical point of revelation, the Prophet (ﷺ) is told to ‘read the Words of his Lord’ – a Lord who is the King of Kings, who has sustained and nurtured him throughout his loss and pain. He is told that he has a Lord who has arranged all of his affairs perfectly; that nothing was a coincidence – it was all the decree of his Rabb, who created him, provided for him and took care of him: reasons for him (ﷺ) to worship Him (‘azza wa jal). The Angel Jibreel imparted upon the Prophet (ﷺ) the words of The Most High to give

him the comfort of knowing that through all those years of hardship upon hardship, Allah was with him. That through this terrifying moment of encountering an angel and receiving Divine revelation, Allah is with Him. And that now that he is a Prophet (ﷺ), Allah will continue to be with him. He has a Lord that he came from and a Lord to whom he will return.

Dearest reader, regardless of your background and circumstances, Allah is there for you through it all. And it doesn't end there. For He is not only a Lord who supports you and who is ready to save you and comfort you during your darkest moments of need. In the second and fourth verses of Surah Fatiha, through the continuation of His introduction as 'Rabbul-Alameen', The 'Lord of Mankind', and Al Malik, the Owner of All That Exists, He tells us something else. It is in our very human nature to want more and more. Allah, as Lord of Mankind and Owner of all things, can bring the very things your heart yearns for into reality even if they are on the other side of the world, or feel as though they are so far-fetched that they will only be achieved in the next world!

In 2011, I intensified my du'a related to my own seemingly unrealistic dream – to own my own house with a magnificent view of the sea. I was living in rented accommodation with my family in South London at the time. And we had zero savings. I would make du'a, visualising myself standing on the balcony of my house with a tall glass of ice-cold lemonade, looking out at the beautiful sea view before me. The vision that accompanied my du'a was so strong that I could almost hear the gentle crash of the waves as they greeted the shore. I made intense du'a on repeat to my Rabb, to Al-Malik, to bless me with this dream. It wasn't something I needed. Alhamdulillah (all praise and thanks are due to Allah), we had a roof over our heads and I was content. But, oh my, it was something my heart yearned for. I wanted it so very much!

Shortly after that du'a, we began to put aside whatever little savings we could. Three years later, our landlord started hinting that he was going to put up the rent. And in that same year, my then husband's father gifted him part of his land in Algeria. We immediately sent all of our savings to the builder and the concrete foundation of our home was laid. The location of the land, which had been in the family for generations, was on top of one of the Atlas Mountains in North Africa. The view was spectacular. When the

house was built, I remember standing on the balcony and leaning on the black steel railings, looking out into the distance, staring at my favourite view: the blue sea, which peeked between two small mountains in the distance.

My Lord had listened attentively. Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem heard my du'a. And with His Knowledge, Power and Ability, being the Owner of everything – people, things and resources – He answered my du'a in the most perfect way. Al-Malik placed land within the possession of my then husband's family. Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem guided my then father-in-law to be lovingly affectionate and generous, gifting us with part of it. My Rabb guided us to work that enabled us to save surely but slowly, providing us with the means to build our home. My Lord, The Owner and Possessor of All Things, created the precise channels needed so that it all came together and a seemingly unrealistic dream became a reality. Those who have read my book *Ramadan Reflections* will know that we lost that home and all its possessions in a fire just five years later, in 2020. But even that was a gift from my Rabb which opened many doors.

Dear reader, your Lord owns all the people, resources, channels of transportation, time, connections and contacts needed to make your dreams a reality in the same way. The very things you ardently desire that are not currently within your reach are fully in the reach of Allah, because He is the Rabbul-Alameen, Al-Malik. The One you call out to is not only Fully Able. He is the King and possesses all that is within His Kingdom, so that all He has to say is: 'Be' – and it is. Know this: because Allah is also Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem, He is an Abundantly Merciful Lord, an Owner and Master who Gives, Nourishes and Sustains with Complete Affection and Love, making it your right to know with certainty that you will find Him wanting to respond to the desires of your heart so long as they align with His Greatest Wish for you: to win in the next life, to enjoy His Paradise, to be near Him and to be blessed with meeting Him and looking upon His Beautiful Face eternally.

I invite you to take a deep breath. Inhale and exhale slowly. Your dreams, the things your heart yearns for – all those exciting hopes – are within the Hands of the Owner of All That Exists. You are about to realise that those dreams are closer to you than you could ever imagine. As you continue to read this book and encounter the truly miraculous stories of ordinary men

and women like yourself, I am sure your beautiful perception of Allah will become crystallised, paving the way for you to discover gems not only in what you need and want, but in the very development of your relationship with Allah. These stories have brought me to tears. They have made me sit here initially with my mouth opened wide in shock, only to close it and look towards the Heavens and whisper: 'Subhana'Allah ya Rabbi.' The following stories will prove to you that these men and women were in the Perfect Care of their Rabb and taken care of by a King who is Gentle, Merciful and Kind towards His servants – wanting to give them more and more. The guidance that will follow is to assist you in transforming your own du'a practice so that you too may receive the relief you need and achieve your dreams.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Verily, Allah is Conscientious and Generous. He would be shy, when a man raises his hands to Him, to turn them away empty and disappointed.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

If you have a Lord who is shy about leaving your du'a unanswered, then all you need to focus on is the asking – both in heart and speech. It is time to transform your du'a and your relationship with the One on whom you are calling.

Part 2:

BEFORE DU'A

Dear reader, before your lips part and you make du'a to the Lord of the Worlds for all that your heart yearns for, prepare your heart.

For it is the heart that must speak to Allah before the utterance of words. Your heart must know to Whom you are speaking. Your heart must be certain, expecting the absolute best response. Your heart must be prepared to be presented to your Rabb, before your words.

I invite you to commit yourself to strengthening the state of your heart and soul, which will transform your du'a and your relationship with Allah.

4

Know Who You are Asking

‘The most precious thing in this dunya (the life of this world) is knowing Allah.’

Ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd Al-Khater

During the course of your journey through this life, Allah (subhanahu wa ta‘ala) may send you circumstances that are completely out of your hands and control. It may be an inability to change a situation because it relies upon another person who is unwilling to change. It may be something you need and want, but that hasn’t been decreed for you. It may be a loss that you cannot change. Where you have freedom of choice in other areas of your life, this one could make you feel painfully imprisoned or just frustratingly stuck – until you’re released and set free by something or someone else. Or so it seems.

Lina is a Somali university graduate who attended one of my online book events after *Ramadan Reflections* was published. We spoke about my book, who she was and about life in general. I cannot remember what led Lina to share her du’a story with me, but I was captivated by it, gave her my number and asked her to message me, explaining that I would tell her why. When she did this, I asked her if she would allow me to include her story in my new book and she kindly agreed. I am so glad she did. Allow me to now share it with you too …

Lina’s Story



During my university days, I always wondered how it was possible to get everything done. I was always anxious about meeting all my deadlines. The only thing that kept me at ease and at peace was my connection to Allah. Whenever I prayed to Him in sujood [prostration], I experienced this serenity after finishing my salah – I felt like I could do anything. And I was able to meet my deadlines on time and sometimes even earlier! In that sense, I was always aware of the capabilities of Allah and how endless they were. But what I didn't really understand, or was aware of, was how limitless His capabilities are. I know we all say it – but I didn't really actually comprehend this until an incident changed my perception of how perfect Allah is in His timing and that He is capable of everything. This one event truly made me realise who He is.

An opportunity arose where I was invited to go to Umrah. Before embarking on the trip, I made du'a to Allah: 'Ya Allah, I pray and ask of You to allow me to make the absolute most of this blessed trip. Allow me to be in the moment and be absolutely present in it all. Provide me with the means to do this without external distractions such as my phone. Allow me to complete my days there without thinking twice about my phone. All praise and thanks is due to You for allowing me to be able to have the means to go this time with a knowledgeable teacher. Ya Allah, I don't know when will be the next time I'll be invited again to visit such blessed lands, so I ask of You and only You to allow me to make the most of it all; to make as many memories as possible; to make as much worship and prayer as possible – so that once I return I am not filled with regret but rather with a smile because of all the memories. I only ask You for help as, time and time again, You answered my du'a and helped me in my times of need. So I ask You again to help me as You have always provided a way that has made me happy and grateful.'

I knew Allah to be One who provides no matter how little or unimportant my need is. I had full conviction that this du'a would be answered, whether it was by giving me the self-restriction I needed

or something else. I also knew I had to follow up my du'a with intention and action. So, I deleted all my social media apps. I told my friends I wouldn't be sending any pictures while I was in the blessed lands. I wouldn't be messaging during my time there and I'd get back to everyone once I was home. I didn't want anything else to preoccupy me except my worship of Allah.

Our Umrah group included three of my cousins, and we arrived in the city of Madinah first before proceeding to Makkah to perform our Umrah. Towards the end of our stay, having prayed the Esha prayer [the fifth and final obligatory prayer of the day], we headed back to the hotel for dinner. When I was about to sit down, I realised I didn't have my phone with me! Panic set in, as we were due to leave for Makkah the next morning after Fajr prayer [the pre-dawn prayer] – shortly after 8am. Not only that, it was nearly 10pm and we had to pack our suitcases by 11pm as our bags were being collected to be loaded onto a van to travel by road.

My cousin and I traced our steps back to the shops. Then we tried Lost Property at Masjid an-Nabawi, with my cousin practising her Arabic. The phone wasn't anywhere. My panic really peaked at this point. All my personal du'a that I had wanted to make on Umrah were on my phone. The du'a that people had asked me to make for them were also on there. I was so scared this would ruin my Umrah. Next morning, a sister in our group who had seen me searching for my phone asked if I had found it, and I just burst out crying. She tried to console me and said, 'Don't worry. Don't let it have a negative impact on you. Your Umrah won't be ruined. It's only a phone.'

Alhamdulillah, there was some relief when I remembered I had all my personal notes saved on my iPad back home. I managed to get my du'a list and wrote it all out in a notebook that I had brought with me. Everyone was advising me to erase my phone. But something kept stopping me. I thought to myself: if I don't hear back from anyone within the next few days that it's been found, I'll do that. And when I did, I also asked Apple to text my cousin's number should it be found.

On our way to Makkah, something settled within me and I accepted I had lost the phone and made a decision that I was not going to let it ruin my experience. I was here for Umrah, not for my phone. We began our Umrah and started our tawaf [circling the Kabah]. Just as we were about to head over to Safa and Marwa, my cousin received a call. My phone had been found. I was incredibly relieved – but realised that this was going to be complicated. We were six hours away from Madinah by car, and the guy who'd found it said he couldn't post it.

I told my Umrah leader that, Alhamdulillah, my phone had been found. He made a few calls and informed me that one of his students was coming to Makkah the night before we flew back to the UK. His student could bring the phone to me. For the remainder of my time in Makkah, I really enjoyed not having my phone. I had no distractions at all and I was fully immersed in the experience. I didn't need the phone at all.

I actually forgot all about it. Being in the blessed lands, I remember thinking: 'If this is Allah's way of answering my du'a, then so be it. A phone is replaceable, but this experience isn't. I don't know if I'll be blessed to be invited again to perform Umrah, so I'm going to make the most of it.' I lost my phone the night before Makkah and got it back the night before we were flying back to the UK, subhana'Allah. It was perfect timing: my stay in Makkah without my phone ended up being the answer to my du'a – to be fully present in my worship and time with and for Allah.

I think I really learned the essence of what tawakkul is, only when I realised who I was relying upon. I've always known Allah is Ar-Razzaq, The One who Provides. And He is The All-Knowing, The Almighty. While I knew that beforehand, it was only after Umrah that I really grasped how important it is to internalise who Allah is and how Limitless He is, which only then allows you to rely upon Him with true tawakkul. Because Allah Knows. We don't know.

Allah will always do things in a manner that is best for us. Sometimes we won't be able to see what that looks like. Here I was, thinking that a path to an undistracted Umrah was deleting the apps from my phone. That was my way of being in the moment, when,

actually, it was better not to have the phone at all. This was my du'a being answered.

Develop Your Du'a

Dearest reader, du'a is a direct conversation between you and the Lord of the Worlds. He wants you to know that He is a Lord who is Mercifully Understanding of your needs – so much so, that He Knows what you need, which may be very different to what you think you need. He wants you to feel safe, knowing that He is in control. Allah wants to hear from you. And He wants you to feel secure, knowing that He has already been and will be the One who will respond in the best way out of love, compassion and care for you. I invite you to think about the perceptions you have of Allah when you ask anything of Him. Who is He to you personally? What do you believe He is capable of? When you speak to your Lord, what memories of who He has been shape your knowledge of who He can be? How does this directly impact the way you call upon Him with your need?

Stop for a moment and consider all the ways Allah has proven Himself to be present in the days of your life. Remember how He allows you to rise, provides for you your daily rizq (provision) – the permission to breathe, eat, live with a roof over your head and enjoy relationships that bring you joy, permitting you to escape into sleep; only to repeat His interaction in your life all over again, daily until your last breath. In the Qur'an, it is said:

> [It is He] who has created me, and it is He who guides me, and it is He who feeds me and gives me to drink. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me, and who will cause me to die, and then will bring me to life (again).
>
> Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:78–81

Even without a deep study of His Names and Attributes, by simply reflecting on His Perfect and Beautiful interactions in your life, you know

your Lord to be consistent in looking after you in the best way. And because He never tires and consistently takes care of you perfectly, I want you to know this about your Rabb: His care for you will never only be in His response to your du'a; it will also be in how He gives you exactly what you need even if this does not make sense at the time. And this is why knowing your Lord outside du'a is crucial, because, through it, you're prepared to expect the unexpected – knowing it is all absolutely best for you.

The value of knowing who you are asking for your du'a

Imam al-Ghazali (may Allah be pleased with him) writes:

> The honour and excellence of a person, by which he surpasses all other creatures, is his ability to know Allah. Knowing Allah (ʿazza wa jal) is the human's beauty, perfection and glory in this dunya; and his provision for the next life.
>
> *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din*

The difference knowing who you are asking makes to your du'a

Dear reader, know this: who you know Allah to be outside your du'a will determine how you make du'a both in heart and speech, which will lead to a refreshing du'a experience.

When we think of du'a, we are often concerned about the words we utter to the One placed perfectly on His Splendid Throne. But before our lips part, even long before the circumstances emerge in our life that lead to our need to call out to Him, there is only one important matter to consider. It is this: are you being true to the only perception of Allah you can ever have, because of your Lord's loving commitment to prove Himself to you?

As Allah says:

> It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.
>
> Surah Faatir 35:28

An interaction is between two beings. Your Lord has shown you who He is. It is time to fulfil your side of the relationship through showing Him the beautiful ways you perceive Him to be. When we approach du'a, we must come prepared to arrive at His Door with the absolute knowledge of whose door we are knocking upon. He is the Merciful Owner of the keys of your situation and indeed your life. He will open the door at the right time and in the best way, leading you not only to that which is best for you, but to something even more precious.

How knowing who you are asking deepens your relationship with Allah

By showing up to du'a and your relationship with Him with a profound and proven knowledge of Him, Allah ('azza wa jal) provides a taste of an early paradise in this world. This paradise is to know Allah, to love Him, find comfort in Him, long to meet Him, fear Him and obey Him. And the beginning is to know Him. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. People do not gather in the houses of Allah, reciting the book of Allah and studying it together, but that tranquility will descend upon them, Mercy will cover them, angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to those near Him.
>
> Muslim

Is there any greater pleasure in this life than knowing and loving Allah? The answer is no! There is absolutely no greater bliss than living your life with a

close, loving relationship with your Lord. All other forms of happiness will never compare to this level of deep joy. Dear reader, do you know why? Because your heart, body and soul was created for one purpose: to know Him, love Him, worship Him and strive endlessly for Him. This is the jannah of this world and we must experience it. For, as the scholar Ibn al-Qayyim reported:

> I heard Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, (may Allah be pleased with him) say, “Verily, there is a Paradise in this world and whoever does not enter it now will not enter the Paradise of the Hereafter.”
>
> *Madaarij as-Salikeen*

It’s Your Turn – Know Who You are Asking

Your belief of who Allah is, and can be, for you will lead you to know how to ask before you make du’a.

- Having read this chapter, I invite you to ask yourself: who has Allah been for me today?
- Recall the events of the past week: who has Allah been to you?
- Name one of your current needs. Now, remember a past need and the way Allah (‘azza wa jal) proved Himself to you at that time. Next, mentally arrive at His Door with this evidence that He can and will be this (and even more) for you again concerning this new need.
- Take a moment to prepare your mind and heart. Call upon your Rabb – tell Allah with a humble firmness who you know Him to be. With heart and tongue in unison, mention your need to your Rabb.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

My Lord, in the days of my life, guide me to a sound knowledge of You. Al-Aleem, The All-Knowing, I wish to know You so deeply that before I even ask You, I feel secure – because I know You so well that I have a concrete certainty You will always have my back. I am imperfect. I forget and will continue to forget. Bless me with the honour of remembering You during all moments of my life. Bless me with the ability to see and acknowledge when and how You interact so beautifully with me. In my times of need, when uncertainty and anxiety may cloud my vision, remind me that how You interacted with me in my past is the absolute minimum of how You will interact with me now and into my future. Fasten my heart to a commitment to know You, worship You, love You, ask of You and rely upon You.

5

Be Vulnerable and Sincere

‘The intelligent man has his tongue behind his heart.
If he intends to say something, he consults his heart
whether he should say it or stay silent …’

Al-Hasan al-Basri, Shu’ab al-Iman

All human beings enter the world in a vulnerable state. And all human beings leave this world in a vulnerable state. In between, we experience many moments that cause us to experience vulnerability and which force us to embrace it. I cannot help but liken vulnerability to thirst. Babies immediately search for milk as soon as they start breathing. It has also been noted that many people ask for water in their dying moments. And when we are on the brink of despair, when our souls feel dehydrated, we too yearn to quench our emotional, mental and spiritual thirst.

There are times when your du’a becomes like a person who is lost in the desert and on the brink of death, and who encounters a passer-by – begging them for even a drop of water. Such a moment, to an outsider, appears to be the ultimate sign of weakness. But that last call with that last atom’s weight of energy – that complete state of vulnerability – is in fact the epitome of strength.

I remember the day I first met Rumaisa. She looked typically Swedish – fair skinned, blue-eyed, wisps of her blonde hair escaping the sides of her black hijab. Her sincerity and love for Allah were apparent even to me, as a stranger. She was married to a successful businessman and had a beautiful young family she was clearly devoted to. And yet, there was a sadness

about her that I could not pin down. It wasn't until a number of years later that she reached out to me for help and I realised I'd had no idea what she had been going through for years. Rumaisa's courage in sharing her vulnerability with Allah led to a very surprising outcome and is proof of how du'a can be transformational when you come to Allah as your raw self.

Rumaisa's Story



My marriage wasn't going well. In truth, I was in an emotionally and spiritually abusive marriage. I had a husband who was always looking at other women, involved with other women and even had an affair with another woman while I mothered our children. This wasn't a secret in our marriage. To punish me further, my husband wouldn't look at me. As I wasn't worthy enough even to look at, I believed I wasn't good enough to be loved. During this unhappy period, we decided to perform Hajj [the mandatory pilgrimage to Makkah]. I had saved all my money over the years to go on Hajj, because my husband did not want to pay for me although Allah had provided him with so much wealth.

Here was my opportunity to ask Allah to make me good enough for my husband. And once I would become good enough for him, back then, I somehow assumed all the other women would disappear. Finally, maybe Allah would give me the one thing I really yearned for in this dunya: love from my husband.

You see so many Instagram pictures of lovely couples at the Kabah. That was not my Hajj experience. I didn't have that. My Hajj was a terrible experience because of the person I was with. I was there at Allah's House, pleading with Him: 'Allah, let me be better to save this marriage.'

I was heartbroken and desperate, and yet my faith felt strong because I knew I was literally at the edge of everything in my life. Allah's response to my du'a was all I had left. This was a time where

I was in the most blessed of places on the face of the earth, during the most blessed days of the year, performing one of the most blessed acts of worship. But I was also at my lowest point. I was tired of this dunya. I felt like I would never be good enough. I remember walking around the Kabah with the last pieces of myself. These were what I presented to Allah in du'a at the Kabah. This was my last chance of being saved.

I remember the Day of Arafah [the most important day of the Hajj pilgrimage] very clearly. With hands raised and with desperate hope that this du'a would save my marriage, my faith, my children, my mental health and my akhirah [eternal life], I cried: 'Allah, please. Let my husband look at me and every time he looks at me, increase his love for me. And every time he looks at me, let me be more beautiful for him.'

After we returned from Hajj, my husband pronounced a divorce upon me according to Islamic tradition. I broke down and fell to the floor. It felt cold. I kept remembering words he had said to me in the past: 'If you ever get divorced, no one will want to remarry you. No one wants to marry a divorcee with kids.'

I was crying uncontrollably and kept repeating: 'Ya Allah, ya Allah.' I felt like a failure to my kids, to my husband and my Lord. I repeatedly asked myself: 'Why couldn't I be good enough?' My heart felt like it was broken into a million pieces. I remember saying, 'Al-Jabbar, these million pieces right here – merge them into one. Heal my heart.'

On the day after my iddah [the three-month window for marital reconciliation] had passed, my divorce was finalised. I could only think of one thing: my du'a at the Kabah. It was clear now that it wasn't possible for me to be lovingly married in this dunya, and so right there and then, in my heart, I yearned for it instead, from my Lord, in the hereafter. I had knocked on the door of Allah but I felt like Allah didn't answer me. I had made du'a in a blessed state of ihraam, as a pilgrim, asking Allah for something during Hajj – a precious pilgrimage where you know He will give you all that you ask for. I'd only asked Him for love, as I never received that in my marriage.

This was the only thing I wanted for myself in this dunya. I had always thought my du'a would be answered by a miraculous change in my husband's behaviour and love for me. But Allah is the Best of Planners – my du'a was indeed answered, but not with him. Allah willed that I would receive not what I thought I wanted, but what was good and best for me. Alhamdulillah, a few months later, I remarried.

This was my new husband's first marriage, and I was aware that his friends were advising him to enjoy this early time. Their advice was based on their many years of experience, they said, and they advised him that as time went on, things will change – your wife won't be as attractive or interesting as you find her now, and vice versa. Marriages lose the spark after a while. It starts to fade away.

My husband treated me lovingly and kindly. But one day, things did change. It was the day when he told me: 'Every time I look at you, you're more beautiful to me than before. Every time I'm with you, I love you even more.'

I instantly remembered my du'a at the Kabah. Hearing these words, I felt so loved and so appreciated. It makes me cry, even now. I didn't tell my husband about the du'a for a long time, but I knew then that he was the answer to that du'a. When I eventually told him about my du'a, he smiled and joked: 'Oh, that's why my friends have been wrong all this time! It's been your du'a!'

Allah knew what I truly wanted. My Lord did not make me wait until the next life to receive love. But my du'a wasn't answered in the way I had wanted it. The answer wasn't through the person I thought it would come through.

I had asked to be loved and, Alhamdulillah, I received that and more. This du'a led me to a different love – I felt so loved by Allah. And for that I feel so grateful.

Alhamdulillah, Allah blessed my new husband and me with our own children. And despite him not being the father of my older children, his love for me always extended towards them too. I asked for love, and Allah gave me so much more.

Develop Your Du’a

What I love about Rumaisa’s story is that in her brokenness, she chose to be vulnerable with herself and with her Lord. She had the courage to acknowledge to herself her own yearning to be loved. And she took that a step further by articulating it in du’a to her Rabb. Dearest reader, this is powerful because shame can silence you both with yourself and, more sadly, it can silence you with your Rabb. And silence prevents du’a. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Nothing repels the divine decree but supplication, and nothing increases life span but righteousness.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Knowing that du’a changes qadr (the belief that Allah knows everything and has already decided everything that will happen), if you allow yourself to be shackled by shame, you are preventing yourself from the fruits of du’a – the beautiful possibilities that can blossom in your life. Rumaisa had a choice to remain silent, trapped in the shame of not being loved by her husband. But she chose to stand up and she took a step towards Allah through du’a. She chose vulnerability – she chose to take an emotional risk. She voiced her pain and her shame to a Lord who holds space perfectly for His servants.

I know it is hard to be vulnerable. A deep-seated level of trust is required if you are to remove the many masks you wear to protect yourself and to survive the memories of all that hurt you in the past, in an attempt to do all that you can to prevent any encounter with that pain again. But you must remove your masks with Allah. He speaks to you in the Qur’an and tells you that He is ‘closer to them than their jugular vein’ (Surah Qaf, 50:16).

You must be vulnerable in your du’a to Allah because there is no one who wants you to grow, evolve, be and do better than Him (‘azza wa jal). Your Lord wants you to win. He wants the ultimate prize for you: Jannah – Paradise.

The value of vulnerability and sincerity for your du’a

Dearest reader, where there is so much shame in this dunya – caused by others and even by yourself to your own soul – your Lord Most High has gifted you du’a to silence shame, action change and develop a close relationship with Him. Vulnerability with Allah is as vital to du’a as oxygen is to the body. To have the courage to present yourself honestly and humbly before your Master, when you know you have no control over the outcome of life’s tests, produces a depth of faith and intimacy with your Lord like nothing else you will ever experience.

The word ‘courage’ comes from the Latin *cor*, which means ‘heart’ – the seat of emotions. The companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> The heart is king and its soldiers are the limbs. If the king is set right, his soldiers will be set right. If the king is corrupted, his soldiers will be corrupted.
>
> *Shu’ab al-Iman*

If the heart is the king who dictates the actions of the limbs, then the courage to be vulnerable is the heart of that king, moving the heart to order the lips to part, the tongue to move, and for raw, meaningful pleas to the Lord of the Worlds to pour forth.

The difference vulnerability and sincerity make to your du’a

Your vulnerability, and the true core of who you are, are important to Allah, as is shown when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions.

Sahih Muslim

The courage to be vulnerable with Allah is the very driver that moves you to find your voice in du'a. I cannot tell you how many times people reach out to me, complaining that they find that their du'a is dry, that they cannot find the words. The main reason is that we stand at the door of Allah as masked selves – which only ever produces masked, inauthentic words.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah be pleased with him) says:

> It has been said: 'Sincerity is to forget the creation seeing you because of continually looking towards The Creator. Whoever adorns himself before the people with what he does not possess, has fallen from Allah's grace.'
>
> *Madaarij As-Salikeen*

The moment you remove the mask and arrive at du'a with your naked, honest self is the moment your heart will speak and cry out freely.

How being vulnerable and sincere deepens your relationship with Allah

Dearest reader, know that your vulnerability in du'a is heard and held by a Most Affectionate and Compassionate Lord. This level of shown vulnerability and received vulnerability develops the closest relationship you will ever experience in this dunya. And when you experience the sweetness of it, your default will become vulnerability – dropping and falling to your knees at His Door whenever you have a need. Why? Because you know you are safe. Your vulnerability is honoured, because it is never seen by Allah as a weakness – only as a strength of your faith in Him. We can never quantify the Generosity of Allah. As if the gains from vulnerability are not enough, Allah specifically uses the word 'mukhlaseen' (sincere ones) to describe His open and vulnerable servants, who will be rewarded:

> But the sincere chosen servants of Allah – for them is a sustenance determined.
>
> Surah As-Saffat 37:40–41

When you think of rizq, you might think of possessions or money. But the sustenance you can receive from sincere du'a that emanates from the deepest part of your vulnerable self is more than simply the answer to your du'a. It is the richest of provisions: a loving, secure, safe relationship with a Lord who is Empathetic, Affectionate and Close. If you want this level of rizq, I invite you to step outside your comfort zone and embrace vulnerability with Allah, offering Him the most sincere, rawest parts of yourself both outside of du'a and in du'a.

Your Lord says:

> Say, 'It is only Allah that I worship, being sincere in my devotion to Him.'
>
> Surah Az-Zumar 39:14

It's Your Turn – Be Vulnerable

Have courage. Be you. Your needs, your heart are within the grasp of Blessed Hands.

- On a piece of paper, list all the things that make you feel ashamed. Make tawbah (the return to Allah through repentance). Burn the list. And follow up with a good deed.
- Imagine yourself walking towards the door of du'a. With each step that you take, remove a mask. And then another, and another, until you are standing at the door of Allah with nothing but your true vulnerable self.
- Commit to doing one of the following three things that leads to sincerity and make a plan of how you will incorporate this

action into your life:

- ▶ Improve your private life so that it is better than your public life.
- ▶ Hide your good deeds.
- ▶ Whenever you find yourself feeling proud and boastful, return to Allah that about which you are feeling proud by acknowledging that your ability or your receiving of something comes only from Him.

- The Islamic scholar, Dr Haifaa Younis mentioned one of the righteous people who said: ‘Think of yourself in the middle of the ocean, in the middle of the night – alone, on a cold night and you’re holding on to only one piece of wood. How would you ask Allah to save you? What kind of du’a and what kind of intimate call to Allah would you make: the begging and the sincerity. Every time you want to ask Allah, think of yourself in that situation and ask.’
- Take a moment to prepare your mind and heart. Now, call upon your Lord. Start to speak to Allah from wherever your core is right now. Here is an example of this process from my own life, in real time:

  ‘Allah, I’m tired. I’m worried that my children will resent me because of how little time I have given to them these last few weeks. I feel like I’m a bad mum. I feel torn between all the different demands on me. Sometimes I just don’t know what is more pleasing to You. And I want You to be pleased with me. I really do. It all sometimes feels a bit heavy. I’m struggling to carry it all. I know the best thing I can ever do is share these feelings with You. I don’t know why I hold back, keeping my thoughts unverbalised in my head when it is a beautiful release just to speak to You just as I am. Especially when it is only You who can truly guide me and help me with my load.’

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Rabbi, I have no reason not to be vulnerable with You. In the depths of my difficulties, remind me to stand humbly before You as my raw self, remembering that I am safe with You because You are Al-Mumin – The Provider of Security and Safety. You are the One truly to be trusted. When I am in need, push me towards courage and to bring to You all of my needs – large and small.

My Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘You should ask Allah for all your needs, even if the strap of your sandal breaks.’ Allah, You are my refuge. You are Al-Qarib, Al-Mujib – the One who is near to me, the One who answers my du’a. I yearn to experience a close relationship with You. Draw me close to You. Remove the barriers I have placed in my du’a to You. Open my chest so that I offer the depths of my vulnerable self to You. And when I come to You with such vulnerability and sincerity, carry me and comfort me as I know You will – for You never break your promises. Hold me, and make me my most vulnerable, open, authentic self with You.

6

Expect the Best from Your Lord

‘None of you should die except while he is having good thoughts about Allah.’

Sahih Muslim

Du’a is often associated with the need or want of something significant. It is uncommon to think of du’a for everyday simple needs. But knowing that du’a is your half of the relationship between you and Allah (‘azza wa jaal), we need to realise that this relationship isn’t just for the big, the important and the fancy. It is as much for the smaller things in life too. The late pioneer of du’a, Muhammad al-Shareef (may Allah be pleased with him), left us with a statement which symbolises the expectations we should have of Allah. He said simply, ‘If you were to stand in front of a King, would you ask him for a penny?’ Muhammad al-Shareef (may Allah be pleased with him) used this question to encourage us to question what we are asking for, because when we realise we are asking the King of Kings who owns everything, indeed – why ask for a penny?! I agree, but it’s also true that sometimes in life, you’ll need just a ‘penny’. And du’a is for that too.

Allow me to introduce you to Sumayya. She is a mother of two whose daughter is the same age as my youngest child. As home educators, we attend the same Scouts group and began to speak and share more after an encounter that became the du’a story I share in this chapter. It left me with a beautiful lesson to take forward in my own life. Dear reader, I pray it leaves its mark on you too. Sumayya shares her story of asking for her own

‘penny’, but with full expectation that she would receive much more from the King of Kings.

Sumayya’s Story



My children attend a Scouts group in our locality and we were running late. We’d just missed the bus, which only comes every fifteen to twenty minutes. I hate being late, so we were walking very fast when a lady suddenly stopped us to ask for help. I could tell by her accent that English was not her first language and she looked lost. For a split second, I didn’t want to stop. I just thought: ‘Oh no, now we’re going to be even more late!’

But I could see that she was really lost and needed help. If someone approaches me like that, I try to do my best to help them. So I opened Google Maps and tried to figure out where she was going. Eventually, she was on her way.

The very second I turned back towards the direction of the Scouts group, I felt the need to make du’a. I needed to ask Allah right there and then for what I wanted in a very special and specific way that I had been using for several years. I made du’a to Allah and said: ‘Allah, for the sake of this ease that I was able to provide for this lady, please also grant us some ease. I really want to get to Scouts on time.’

I was following the sunnah [way of life] of Musa [alayhis-salam – peace upon him] when he was in need and asked of Allah, after having been of assistance to others. When Musa arrived at the well of Midian, he found a group of people watering their herd. A little way apart from them, he noticed two women, without their father, holding back their herd. He asked them: ‘What is the problem?’ They replied: ‘We cannot water our animals until the other shepherds are done, for our father is a very old man.’

So he watered their herd for them, then withdrew to the shade and prayed: 'My Lord! I am truly in desperate need of whatever provision You may have in store for me.'

My Qur'an teacher has always advised us to have good expectations of Allah. And in that moment by the road with my kids, asking Allah to help me as I had been of help to another, I had complete trust in the knowledge that He would grant me ease.

I didn't know how He would help me, but knew He would. I hadn't walked more than five seconds before the children and I saw your daughter with the car door open, and you, Aliyah, sitting in the driving seat, waving us over. And then you said: 'Assalamu alaikum [peace be upon you], hey – we've been waiting for you for the past few minutes to walk past as I couldn't find a space to park to offer you a lift.'

I got into the car and it took a few minutes for me to process what had just happened, as I was completely mind-blown. We had walked to Scouts that same route for more than a year, but this was only the second time I had ever seen someone else from Scouts on our route. I had never experienced a du'a being responded to that quickly.

It deepened my trust in Allah. And it reinforced my belief that I should continue my life with an expectation of Him that I have always had.

My belief is as follows: ease is circular. I identify an area of my life where I need ease. I request ease from Allah and then, as time passes, Allah grants me ease. I thank Him and say: 'Thank you for providing me with this ease. Please allow me to be a source of ease for others.'

Then, when Allah allows an opportunity for me to be an ease for others. I say: 'Allah, thank you for allowing me to be a source of ease for others. For the sake of the source of ease for this person, please, Allah, grant me more ease.'

Then it continues. And it is a never-ending circle. The reason why I think it works is that I have an expectation that Allah will grant me ease during a difficulty. I'm then grateful. When Allah grants me an opportunity to be a source of ease for others, I'm again grateful.

Then I request more and I receive more. And then my gratitude increases and I'm even more grateful.

Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] says: 'If you are grateful, I will give you more.'

Surah Ibrahim 14:7

When your impossibles – the big things you make du'a for – become possible, you thank Allah. But you still don't think to make du'a about the smaller everyday mundane things. We don't make them enough. But I was shown that day that my Lord Listens to the big and small.

Develop Your Du'a

Dear reader, when in need, why do you choose to turn to some people over others? The answer is simple: you know you can depend on them. They have proved themselves and you feel secure in their presence. So it is only natural for you to rush to this person, knowing you'll be in safe hands. You would never choose to go to someone who has disappointed you and let you down. It cuts too deep. This is all in human terms – so what then about our relationship with Allah ('azza wa jal)? It is no different. In fact, there is more concrete reason for us to expect nothing less than the absolute best when we make du'a to Him.

Unlike human beings, who fall short for a variety of reasons, Allah is consistent both in His Attributes and the manifestation of His Attributes. He does not stop being your Rabb. He does not cease taking care of you, supporting you and nourishing you. He will always be your Provider. He does not remove His Attentive Watchful Gaze from you. He continues to Listen, Give and Withhold. His Protection never leaves you. His Mercy is immediate and ongoing. Without a doubt, there can never be disappointment with Allah.

It was narrated that the companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> Allah, may He be exalted, says: ‘I am as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me to himself, I Remember him to Myself; if he remembers Me in a gathering, I Remember him in a gathering better than it; if he draws near to Me a hand-span, I Draw near to him an arm’s length; if he draws near to Me an arm’s length, I Draw near to him a fathom’s length; if he comes to Me walking, I Go to him at Speed.’
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

I mentioned this soul-comforting hadith qudsi in my previous book, and I can and never will tire of it. How you think of Allah is how you will find Him to be. Your du’a and, indeed, your relationship with Him, are as simple as that.

The value of expecting the best from your Lord for your du’a

Dear reader, if there is only one thing you will take away from this book, let it be this: how you think of Allah before du’a, during du’a and after du’a is how you will find your Lord.

Your positive expectation of Allah is everything. Choose to have the absolutely highest expectations of your Rabb. You are calling upon the Owner of the Heavens and Earth. You must develop your perception and expectations of Him to the point that, as you walk through the days of your life, you do so as though you see Him in front of you: protecting you, moving things and people out of your way, placing people and things on your path, rewarding you, forgiving you, guiding you, making things clear to you – loving you. When you live with Allah in this way, finding Him (‘azza wa jal) in the everyday, you will develop such a sound and trusting relationship with Him that you know you can and must have beautiful, lofty

expectations of Him; because He has not disappointed you, will not disappoint you and, subhana'Allah, cannot disappoint you.

The difference expecting the best from your Lord makes to your du'a

Many arrive at du'a unsure of their worthiness to be answered, unsure if As-Samad, The One Who Hears, has even heard them, unsure if He will open the door. If this is your perception of Allah, then you will find Him to be as you think Him to be – leading you to drown in disappointment. Imagine how different it is when you knock upon His Door with a request with a heart full of firmness and confidence? It's life-changing, because you knock knowing it's just a matter of when and how your Rabb decides to answer – but that He will most certainly answer. Your need is not too small and unworthy. The only thing that needs to change is your expectation of Him – and then you will find Him to be so.

Dearest reader, I invite you to tweak one small aspect of your interaction with your Lord. As you go about your daily life, ask yourself the following question: 'Who is Allah being to me and for me in this exact moment?' Then tell yourself He is the King of Kings! I can have more! What more can I expect from my Lord?

This expectation and asking more of Allah may make you feel uncomfortable at first. There can be an acute sense that we have to tiptoe around Allah and tiptoe in our du'a. No! You are dealing with Rabbul-Alameen, the Lord of the Worlds, who is consistent in His relationship with you. There are no ifs, no buts, no questions with Him. You can ask of Him, expect of Him and lean on Him completely. And yes, you can expect even more! Stretch your faith in Allah by asking yourself these questions regularly. In doing so, you'll experience a full-circle moment. Just as you will develop your faith in your Lord, you will live a life of trust, evidenced in your extended expectations. And because Allah says: 'I am as My servant thinks I am', He will meet those expanding expectations with more and more.

How expecting the best from your Lord deepens your relationship with Allah

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Verily, thinking well about Allah Almighty is a part of the excellent worship of Allah.
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

> Whoever reflects upon the matter properly will realise that thinking positively of Allah will lead to doing righteous deeds, because the only reason for doing righteous deeds is his thinking positively of his Lord and believing that He will reward him for his deeds and accept them from him. So what motivates him to do good deeds is his thinking positively of Allah. Hence the more he thinks positively of Allah, the better his deeds will be.
>
> *Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi*

Dear reader, look at the Generosity of your Lord. You are rewarded for thinking well of Him. You are rewarded for having the best of expectations of Him. Such thoughts and expectations mean that He will meet your expectations in being the Lord that you think Him to be, thus granting you what you need and want. And, in turn, you are provided the sweet intimacy that comes from the security of being loved deeply and consistently.

It's Your Turn – Have High Expectations

> Change your thoughts about Allah and you will find spiritually fulfilling change in your du'a and your life.

- Think of something you need or want. What do you expect from Allah specifically in relation to what you are asking for?
- Take it a step further. What else can you expect from Allah?
- Don't stop – keep going. What *more* can you expect from Allah?
- Take a moment to prepare your mind and heart. Call upon your Lord. Tell Him who you know Him to be. Tell Him your honest thoughts and feelings about how difficult or how limited you feel in being able to achieve what you are asking for. Now, follow that up by telling Allah that though you are imperfect, scared, tired and worried, you rely fully on Him and expect Him to help, and tell Him what your expectations are of Him.
- Continue to live a life asking yourself the question: 'What more do I expect of my Lord?' Since He is the King of Kings, know that you can have more!

Allah, Transform My Du'a

Rabbi, I cannot count the many times in my life where You have not only met my expectations but exceeded them. I need not sell myself short with You. You possess Power, Ownership and the Full Ability to do as You please. There are no limits to Your Provision, no limits to Your Kindness and Generosity. There are no limits to what You can do for me. I ask You to fill my heart with full expectation and dependency upon You. Open my eyes to what is possible with You, and fill my heart with the excitement and urgency to desire more and to expect the absolute best from You. Make this my default position, so that when I am desperate for relief or excited by my goals and dreams, I ask of You from a place where not only will You provide, but each and every time, You will Divinely exceed any of my limited human expectations. You are Al-Muhsin, The One who Does Good with Excellence. As I aim for ihsaan, excellence, in my du'a to You, place ihsaan in my expectations of You too.

7

Be Certain in Your Du’a

‘I never heard Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) relating anything that he conceived it to be so-and-so, but that it proved to be as he had conceived it.’

Sahih Bukhari

Dear reader, everything about your life is uncertain except for two things: you were born and you will die. Acknowledging these certainties forces you to think about the One from whom these certainties originate. Your creation and existence were only possible by the will of Allah. And the time you have left in this world is only within the realms of His Knowledge too. Everything in between these two moments is uncertain. As you navigate through this uncertain life with du’a as your compass, know this: whatever you are searching for and asking for, however you ask for it, whatever time of day or night you ask for it – you must ask for it with a certainty that Allah will move the point of the compass towards the best direction for you.

Du’a requires certainty. Without this, is it even du’a? Personal supplication is the call from a servant who believes in a Creator who possesses everything in the Heavens and the Earth and can move mountains. If there is no certainty in this, then this *isn’t* in fact du’a. Over the years, I have been forced to develop my levels of yaqeen (certainty). And now, by Allah’s Permission, I am absolutely sure my du’a will be answered in some shape or form. I call upon Allah with concrete confidence, to a point that I believe with all my mind, heart and soul that

my du’a is never a case of *if*, but rather, of *when* and *how*, as my own story will show you.

My Story



In 2011, my then husband and I were invited to perform Hajj. Although the way that Hajj became a reality is a du’a story in and of itself, I want to share something else about it that was quite literally a miracle. The Day of Arafah on the plains of Arafah is the pinnacle of Hajj. Everything gears up to this momentous day.

Going on Hajj in 2011 was not something I had planned to do. But I had been making so much du’a for it, so when it happened in the way that it did, I knew I had to give it my all – particularly the du’a I would make on that precious day. Arriving on the plains of Arafah and entering one of the large tents was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating. I had my little polka-dot notebook safely in my bag. The khutbah (sermon) began and after it finished, I knew the next five hours had to be spent in focused du’a. Perhaps I would never stand on Arafah again.

The Hajj agents advised us to stay in the tent to make du’a, due to the sweltering heat outside. I found a spot inside to begin making my du’a, but in between calling upon Allah and drinking water, I just couldn’t concentrate. The tent was packed with other people and I became distracted. To add to my frustration, despite the AC being on, I felt like I was in a sauna. I was completely drenched in my own sweat and soon found myself lying down from heat exhaustion.

The Hajj agents must have known this was a regular annual occurrence as they kept offering us water bottles that had been submerged in ice. All of us – men, women, young, old – rushed for the bottles, poured water over our heads, drank it and placed the cold plastic bottles against our skin for relief.

All the same, I began to panic, wondering how on earth I would be able to utilise this golden opportunity of making du'a on Arafah. I tried my best to focus but it just wasn't improving. So I told my then husband that I needed to get outside, and fast.

Stepping out into the heat of Arafah was hard. I don't know why I thought it would be easier. It wasn't as humid as inside the tent, but the glaring sun was relentless. I quickly put on my sunglasses as it was difficult to see and walk without them. We began to look for a quiet spot amongst the rocky open plains. We found one and sat at a distance from one another so we could both be in privacy as we made du'a.

However, once again I couldn't concentrate. The heat was just too much to bear. I began to cry and complain to Allah: 'Allah, I'm here. Labbayk Allahumma labbayk [here I am, O Allah, here I am]. I am here at Your service. I want to make du'a from my heart to You. I want to speak to You. I just can't focus like this. Allah, help me. Forgive me. If my sins are an obstruction to my ability to focus on my du'a, then I beg You to forgive me. I need You. Allah, give me shade. I know You can. I am certain You will. Shade me so I can focus in my du'a.'

At least an hour must have passed where I struggled to make du'a. I really couldn't handle it and decided to get up and start looking around. I must have been delirious by that stage, as Arafah is literally a plain: just as you are baring your soul to Allah, your body is also exposed to the sun's heat. Nevertheless, I continued to search, conscious that the more I searched, the more precious du'a time was passing me by.

And then I saw it – the skinny trunk and branches of a tree perhaps about five feet tall. It bore no leaves. I wondered how it had even grown there at all. Tired of looking and just wanting to rest my back against something, I sat down and leaned against the tree. It was so thin, it barely supported my spine.

But within minutes of my back touching the dry, pale, greyish-brown trunk, I felt as though I was being shaded from the sun. There was a clear shift in the temperature I felt beside this tree. I thought I

must be hallucinating, so I stood up again and moved away from the tree. I immediately experienced the same level of heat as before.

Sitting back against the tree again, I felt an instant coolness and began to cry. Through a dying tree, Allah answered my du'a and provided an opportunity to bring my du'a to life.

'Thank You, Allah. Thank You, Allah,' I cried.

For the hours that remained, I made focused du'a and spoke in solitude with my Lord. After the sun set, signifying the end of the Day of Arafah, I began my descent back to the tent and knew that whatever had been willed for the rest of my life, I would be more than okay. All I needed was certainty in my du'a – and my Lord would take care of the rest.

Develop Your Du'a

Dearest reader, what are you absolutely certain of? Perhaps it is the fact that the sun rises from the East. That you are alive and breathing. Maybe it is your name or the colour of your skin. There are things that are unquestionably certain. There are also experiences in your life that have occurred which you can definitely describe as joyous, and experiences that broke you.

I invite you now to recall experiences where you can assuredly say Allah was your aid: the times when He Heard you, Listened to you and Responded to your call. Recalling these times as frequently as possible is important for the development of your du'a. In the face of natural forgetfulness, doubt and uncertainty, anchoring yourself to memories of when Allah most certainly answered your du'a can be crucial to your ability to make du'a with certainty – especially during times that are themselves uncertain.

There is an important hadith in relation to yaqeen, certainty, which I invite you to sit with and absorb. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> The hearts are vessels, and some have greater capacity than others. When you ask from Allah Almighty, O people, then ask Him while you are convinced He will answer. Verily, Allah does not answer the supplication of a servant from behind an unmindful heart.
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

The value of being certain for your du’a

Returning to the fact that Allah wants to be in relationship with you, I must tell you that Allah wants to hear from you and wants you to be certain when you call upon Him. Certainty is an internal state that resides in the heart but must filter into action. How certain you are is evidenced in the way you live your life and make du’a. Prior to du’a, have you made choices that display your certainty in the fact you are a traveller on a journey towards the akhirah? Do you arrive at the door of du’a cloaked in emaan (faith) and good deeds? Are you so certain about du’a that you choose the best times and places to make du’a? Is your heart ready – certain because you trust in Allah’s Might and Knowledge? Often the difference in du’a being answered is down to yaqeen – certainty. The one who is certain Allah will answer will find his or her Lord as they think Him to be. The one who is uncertain about the response of Allah will also find Allah as he or she thinks him to be.

When the Prophet (ﷺ) was fleeing to Madinah with his companion Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), Abu Bakr is reported to have said:

> While we were in the cave fleeing to Madinah, I said to the Prophet: ‘If one of them were to look down, they would see us under their feet!’ The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, ‘O Abu Bakr, what do you think of two with whom Allah is the third?’
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Here we find that the Prophet (ﷺ) is teaching Abu Bakr a vital lesson: during moments of need, we are never alone. Being certain that you are not alone creates an awareness in the heart of Who is with you, transforming your state before you make du'a. You communicate your needs to Allah not as a Creator who is distant, but you speak to Him as though you can see Him before you.

The difference certainty makes to your du'a

Amr Ibn Abdi Qays, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

> Were the veil over the unseen to be lifted, that would not increase our conviction.
>
> Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risalah al-Qushayriyah*

Dearest reader, this is what we must work towards: to be so certain of Allah prior to du'a that certainty infiltrates our du'a to the extent that as our hands lower and lips cease to move, our eyes begin to search for the answer and response, knowing with a firmness of heart that it will come – no matter how long it takes. The confidence in our du'a rising above the heavens, to be heard by The Creator, leads to our searching and waiting in the knowledge the answer will come.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

> Patience is half of faith and conviction is faith in its entirety.
>
> *Shu'ab al-Iman*

How being certain deepens your relationship with Allah

There is a beautiful verse in the Qur'an where Allah shares with us a short but powerful statement of the Prophet Zakariya (alayhis-salam – peace be upon him) who said:

> My Lord! Surely my bones have become brittle, and grey hair has spread across my head, but I have never been disappointed in my prayer to You, my Lord!
>
> Surah Maryam 19:4

Du'a is knowing your Lord. It is being vulnerable to your Lord. It is having the very best expectation of Allah and here Zakariya (alayhis-salam) shows you how to take it a step further by telling Allah clearly how certain you are of Him and His Perfect Response in answer and timing. This is one of the keys to du'a: to be so certain of Him outside du'a that you automatically speak and call upon Him with such hope, expectation and certainty in it. Allah interacts with you according to your level of certainty, leading you to success but also peace in this dunya and a taste of Jannah in the form of a beautified relationship with your Rabb.

He ('azza wa jal) tells you:

> And He will provide him from [sources] he could never imagine. And whoever puts their trust in Allah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Indeed, Allah has set a measure for all things.
>
> Surah At-Talaq 65:3

It's Your Turn – Be Certain

There's no room for saying, 'Allah, please.' Show up with certainty. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> When one of you calls upon Allah, let him be determined in the supplication, and he should not say, 'O Allah, give

me if You will', for there is no one to coerce Allah.

Sahih Bukhari and *Sahih Muslim*

Here is some guidance on how to do this.

- Take a piece of paper and, on the bottom line of the page, write down one thing of which you are absolutely certain. On the line above, answer the following question: How am I sure? Continue to the line above answering the same question until you can no longer answer. Once you've reached this point, take note of your personal reflections and how this makes you feel.
- Next, take a piece of paper and at the top, title it: 'I am certain in You, Allah, because …' On each line, list down one reason why you are certain of Allah. Fill the page. You may want to keep this page safe for future reference.
- Take a moment to prepare your mind and heart. Call upon your Lord. In the same way Zakariya (alayhis-salam) expressed his vulnerability and need, do so and then follow it up by telling your Lord how certain you are that He will hear you, respond to you, never disappoint you, open a door for you, provide a way out for you and grant you that which you need and want. Tell Him you are certain He will never disappoint you. Tell Him you are certain He will respond in a way which you cannot yet conceive because you are limited and He is Unlimited, Powerful and Perfect.
- As you continue through the journey of this dunya, find more reasons to affirm your certainty in Allah. Pick up a leaf, trace its design and reflect upon creation and The Creator. Study the function of an organ and how no machine could ever match its design, size and efficiency. Search for more reasons to be certain in your Lord and, when you find them, tell Allah: 'I am certain You will answer my du'a because of this.'

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Al-Mubin, You are The One who Makes Things Clear. O Allah, I ask You to remove any doubts from my heart. Make it clear to my mind and heart who You are and can be for me in this relationship of du’a. Never let me despair of Your guidance, Your Mercy and Your ability to respond to my requests. Fill my heart with certainty, such that I worship You as though I see You and although I cannot see You, because I am certain that You see me, hear me and know me, You will surely answer my du’a.

8

The Best Day for Du’a

‘The best supplication is the supplication on the Day of Arafah, and the best thing that I and the prophets before me have said is: “There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, alone, without partner. To Him belongs the dominion, and to Him belongs all praise, and He is capable of all things.”’

Sunan Tirmidhi

It’s hard when you want something badly – especially when everyone around you seems to have that thing without exerting any effort. Days and nights can pass in exhaustion from all the energy expended in trying to achieve that one goal, that one dream, that one core desire of your heart. But no matter what you do, nothing appears to work and you’re still left without.

Sharmina is a British Bangladeshi with a cheerful Northern accent. She was a member of my early readers’ group for my previous book. When I reached out, asking if she had a du’a story she would like to share, she immediately responded by sending me a poem and a picture. After reading and looking at the photo, I couldn’t hold back my tears. Sharmina’s story describes the depths of desperation and yearning she endured for years, for something that comes effortlessly to so many. Her story describes a different type of effort she needed to make, completely unrelated to her goal, which changed her life forever. (First, I should mention that as trying

to conceive is a sensitive subject for many, my hope is that the following story will offer some comfort for those who are being tested in this area.)

Sharmina's Story



Being married for ten years with no children has been the greatest difficulty I have experienced in my life. Seeing other people having children produced a happiness within me. But also I felt sad for myself. There was a void – an empty hole in the heart between me and my husband. We used to share stories about what life would be like if we ever had a child. One such time was when my husband and I were eating iftar [the post-dusk meal upon completing a fast] in the quiet of our flat and I would turn to him and say, 'Can you imagine having a child right now – it wouldn't be as peaceful as this!'

He'd laugh and say, 'Oh – but it would be so nice!' And then he'd go into detail about how he would teach our child about Allah and Ramadan.

Everywhere I went, there were constant reminders that we did not have children. I avoided certain shopping centre entrances – I didn't want to pass by shops with baby clothes. I remember one time I saw these cute little Ted Baker floral dresses and baby suits. I touched one of the outfits. It was very hard. It upset me so much. I wanted to experience choosing clothes for our own child. But by now we did not think it would ever happen for us and so we both tried to avoid it all together.

Every month if my period was late by a few days, I would get excited that I might be expecting. But I didn't dare check for fear of the pregnancy test being negative. It felt easier to prolong the hope than crush myself with a certain 'no'.

For nine years of my marriage, I worked in a pharmacy. Part of my role included checking pregnancy tests for other women. I had free access to these pregnancy tests myself. While working at the

pharmacy, I would do these tests all the time. I would tell myself: 'This time, it's going to be it. It's going to be it' – hoping that my pregnancy symptoms were real. Each time, I would place my own used pregnancy test on a little shelf in the bathroom of the pharmacy. I didn't want to look at it until I was ready, as I was secretly looking forward to being surprised. It was always negative. They always ended up being phantom symptoms. Every month, I would have to go through this. I would break down and cry in my husband's arms.

Our families meant well, but it didn't help when visiting them or seeing them at family weddings, where I was always asked intrusive questions. Returning home where I could safely break down, I always found myself in floods of tears. My husband tried to console me. He was going through his own form of grief – but it was different.

The entire situation was very hard. It was relentless. Every day for ten years.

Unless a person goes through this, they simply cannot know the immense heartbreak that is present twenty-four hours of every day. It is so intense. There's always a constant reminder that you do not have a child. For example, there were members of our family WhatsApp group who shared videos of their children's latest milestones, and I was always happy for others. But it really hurt. It was just a big reminder that I didn't have a child and had not yet experienced motherhood.

I remember one time, a relative was pregnant and looking down at her own bump, she exclaimed, 'Look! Baby is moving. Feel it!' Due to what I was going through, I didn't want to share in that moment. It became so challenging when newborns arrived in our immediate family – having to be around them all day, every day. We were all living under one roof at that time. To navigate this test on my own was hard enough.

Years passed. Pregnancies turned into babies in arms. Babies began to walk and go to school. Young children became teenagers. And we both continued to make du'a through it all.

And then Allah called us to His House in 2018. The Day of Arafah was unbearably hot, at nearly 50°C. It was also extremely dry. In the

last half an hour of the Day of Arafah before the sun set, our guide advised us to come out of our tent to make the most of the last thirty minutes of du'a on this blessed day.

I walked out into warm rain and a beautiful breeze. There was a sea of men draped in white and some people were trying to climb the Mountain of Rahma to make their du'a there. There were so many hands outstretched towards the sky with rain pouring down. You could smell the heat.

I had pictured Yawmul Arafah for years and how I would make du'a alongside my husband – praying for Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] to bless us with our miracle baby.

Even though I had pictured it in a certain way, our own Day of Arafah was even more beautiful. An intense sense of hope filled my heart. It was apparent that this day was indeed the Day of Arafah because of its serenity. In the back of my head, I could constantly hear a whisper saying: 'Make du'a as much as possible for whatever you want. If your Hajj is accepted, your heartfelt du'a will also be answered.'

My husband and I were side by side, with our arms raised up high. Everyone else became invisible. Tears were streaming down our faces and we begged Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] to bless us with a child. We spoke to Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] about our struggles – we pleaded together. Even though it's been many years, I still remember every detail about that day, including the own wording of my du'a: 'Allah, bless us with a child who will be righteous, beautiful and a good Muslim/ah as soon as possible. Let him or her be the coolness of our eyes.'

Making this du'a, which had become so frequent on my tongue, was different this time. I put my complete faith in Him. I begged Him: 'Allah, if you know we are deserving of having a child and to journey through this life as parents, then bless us with a child. If it is not good for us, then don't.'

This time, I literally put it all onto Allah. I gave it completely to Him.

It felt different from any other time, because we were in the blessed lands and we had dropped everything to just prostrate to our Lord to

beg Him for what was empty in our lives. We made du'a with full reliance upon Allah to bless us and if He didn't – it is because He knew best. I trusted Him fully. It had been almost eight years. And we were here on the Day of Arafah.

Just after coming back from Hajj, I began to change and came closer to Allah. I quit my job of nine years despite my colleagues being like family to me. It is difficult to explain, but I was different – I just wanted nearness to my Lord. I went to Egypt to stay with a cousin who was there for a year. I took lessons from a Qur'an teacher and began to memorise the Qur'an. In between our lessons, I used to talk to my teacher about my life. She couldn't speak much English, but it was like a warm hug talking to her. She used to make me feel good. She used to make me feel happy despite what I was going through. My Qur'an lessons and teacher provided me with much hope and comfort, even though my du'a hadn't been answered.

Then, two years later, I knew in my heart something was different. I felt I was pregnant before I gave in to my sister-in-law, who kept bugging me to take a pregnancy test. But still I was scared it would be negative. I bought the test the day before, but waited until the morning to take it at Fajr time. I couldn't sleep that whole night, as I knew I was going to take the test. I made so much du'a that night. I woke up, prayed tahajjud [night prayer] and Fajr in the early hours of the morning. I then woke up my husband and told him, 'I'm going to take the test and together, we need to see what the results are.'

I went into the bathroom, took the test and I placed it on a shoebox just outside the bathroom. We walked into the living room and waited there for the alarm to go off on my phone, having set it for two minutes. We held hands tightly. As soon as the alarm went off, we walked over to the shoebox holding hands and I looked at the test. It was positive! We were both crying, hugging each other. I was shaking. I could not believe it.

But what made it even more special, more unbelievable, was that it was exactly two Islamic hijri [Islamic calendar] years from the day I had stood under the warm rain in Arafah making du'a. We had discovered we were expecting on the Day of Arafah, subhana'Allah.

I had a very traumatic birthing experience and ended up having an emergency C-section. So when I first saw my daughter, I was slightly dazed and in shock – but she looked exactly like my husband! I was like: 'Oh, my goodness!' She was beautiful. She was a gift from Allah to us on the Day of Arafah and so it was natural for us to name her Arafah. She's now two years old and, truly, she is the coolness of our eyes.

But now that I look back, I understand why Allah didn't bless us with her earlier. Her arrival was His Perfect Timing. I was twenty when I got married, and my husband was twenty-eight. Marriage hadn't been easy for us in the early years. I'm from up North and he's from London. It was a massive move for me to make. I'd been to a predominantly white school, college and university. So coming to East London was a culture shock! It's another Bangladesh, really! I didn't have family here and couldn't travel back up North as much as I wanted. It was hard not having family and friends around. To have a child in these circumstances would have been difficult for me.

In the year that Arafah was born, ten years after we got married, we were at a good place in our marriage. I was a lot more mature, wiser and much more patient. Even though I'd wanted a baby at twenty, I wasn't really ready. But when she came, I was more aware and prepared for the sacrifices I had to make in being a mother. It was the right timing. Everything – du'a and the answer – is at its right time, not a second too soon or too late.

Develop Your Du'a

When you are ill, you take yourself to the doctor and the doctor hands over your prescription of medicine. Your immediate next step is most likely to take that prescription to the pharmacy to pick up your medication. No questions are asked. If you do have one, it's most likely because you want to look into alternative medicine instead but, even then, you wouldn't question the recommended dose. And the reason is because you trust the

doctor or herbalist to whom you have entrusted your wellbeing. Constantly being reminded that the health of our bodies and minds is important, it is incredible how much trust we place in other individuals simply by knowing they are qualified in their field. So, dear reader, I have one specific question for you: What about your soul?

Your soul requires nourishment and medicine in the right dose and at the right time. Who best to turn to other than the Owner of the Unseen and the prescriptions He has handed down through His Book, the Qur'an and His Messenger's sunnah?

Du'a is the personal supplication of servant to Creator. And it can be made in any language and at any time, so long as it doesn't contravene the shariah (Islamic law). Allah who is Al-Aleem, The All-Knowing, is The Doctor of all Doctors. His prescriptions for the wellbeing of our souls, which most certainly will continue into their journey into the akhirah, after our bodies have fulfilled their role, are to be taken even more seriously and applied. In the Qur'an and sunnah, there are days and times when it is recommended to make du'a. That is when we are told that du'a is mustajaab – surely to be answered. If we are certain that Allah exists, that we came from Him and will return to Him and that He ('azza wa jal) sent the Final Messenger (ﷺ) as a guide to help us on our journey to Him and His Gardens of Delight, then everything that He has revealed whether directly in His Own Words or through the Prophet (ﷺ) should become even more precious than any prescriptions we might receive from a human doctor.

The value of making du'a on the best day

While there are certain days and times when du'a is more likely to be answered, for now I wish to focus on the Day of Arafah, the ninth day of Dhul Hijjah, when millions of men and women perform the pilgrimage of Hajj. This was the day that Sharmina and her husband had chosen to make their du'a to Allah together. Whether you have been to Hajj or not, I invite you to read these ahadith slowly, internalising the fact that Allah has provided prescriptions for a nourishing reason.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said the following:

> The best supplication is that which is made on the day of Arafah. The best of it is what was said by myself and the prophets before me: ‘There is no God but Allah alone, without any partners. Unto Him belong the dominion and all praise and He has Power over all things.’
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

> The promised day is the Day of Resurrection, the witnessed day is the day of Arafah, and the witnessing day is Friday (85:2–3). The sun does not rise or set over a day better than it. In it is a moment in which a believing servant does not supplicate to Allah for good but that Allah will answer him, and he does not seek refuge from any evil thing but that Allah will grant him refuge.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Dearest reader, these are not mere words shared by the Prophet (ﷺ). These are ahadith that point to the worth and value of the Day of Arafah for you.

The difference the best day makes to your du’a

Du’a on Arafah is so very special. I want you to experience the way in which your du’a on that day is answered. And so, I need not say more than this: I ask Allah, The Most High, to facilitate Hajj for each and every one of you, in the way that I know He Can and Will. May He increase your wealth to afford to go without taking away from what you need after you return. May He take you there in the best of health and in the strongest state of faith. May He place knowledge of Him in your minds. May He nestle certainty within the crevices of your heart. May you make du’a in all the ways that you are His humble and vulnerable slave. May He answer all your du’a on this spectacular day. Ameen.

How making du’a on the best day deepens your relationship with Allah

Your soul’s purpose in this life is to worship Allah as a Creator who is One, with no partners. True ubudiyyah (servitude) is to prove your belief through your actions. To grab hold of the opportunity to take His Prescriptions seriously, in the knowledge that your soul’s health depends on them, is a deep sign of your trust in Him. And when you trust in Allah, Allah turns to you. As Ibn al-Qayyim says:

> The condition of the one who relies on Allah is like the condition of the one who is given a dirham by a King, then it gets stolen from him; so the King says to him: ‘I have many times as much as that, so don’t worry. When you come to me, I will give you from my treasures much more than that.’ Thus if this person knows the truthfulness of the king’s statement, and trusts him, and knows that his treasures are full of that, then what he missed will not make him sad.
>
> *Madaarij As-Salikeen*

It’s Your Turn – May Allah Invite You to Hajj

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever wants to go for *Hajj*, let him hasten to do it, because he may fall ill or some other problems may arise.
>
> *Abu Dawood*

- Aside from the fact that Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and is an opportunity to be cleansed of all sins, it is also a gift – to make du’a for all that you need and want. I invite you to begin

a Hajj fund. The story behind Hajj is sacrifice. What will you choose to sacrifice regularly to save the money needed to perform Hajj – the pilgrimage of sacrifice?

- Make a list of all the days and times when du'a is mustajaab, such as between Asr [third daily prayer] and Maghrib [fourth prayer] on Fridays, when it is raining and between Dhur [second daily prayer] and Asr on Wednesdays. Enter those days and times in your calendar. Use them – they are prescriptions from your Lord Most High.
- Make du'a that Allah blesses you with the invitation to perform Hajj. Be vulnerable and tell Him why you need to go. Tell Him you are certain He will invite you.
- With full expectation and yaqeen, begin to prepare for Hajj, knowing that Allah can and will take you there. Prepare by keeping a diary throughout the year of all the du'a you will make on Arafah. Keep adding to it throughout the year.

Allah, Transform My Du'a

My Lord, I have one simple and short request: grant me the honour of standing on the soil of Makkah, reciting the following blessed words: *Labbayk Allahumma labbayk, labbayk laa shareeka laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wa'l-ni'mata laka wa'l-mulk, laa shareeka lak.* Here I am, O Allah, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise and blessings are Yours, and all sovereignty, You have no partner. There is no other place I would rather be. Rabbi, I have full expectation You will invite me to stand on the Best Day making du'a to You. O Allah, make it so.

9

The Best time for Du’a

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

‘The best of prayer after the obligatory prayers is the night prayer.’

Sahih Muslim

Allah has given us du’a, which is not restricted to a place or a time. But He (‘azza wa jal) has also given us the crème de la crème of times where He interacts with us and our du’a differently. This most precious of times is tahajjud – the night prayer. Tahajjud requires you to up the game in your worship, sacrifice sleep for His Sake and stand in prayer. When you do, you will find Him Appreciative, literally descending to be closer to you – just so that He can respond.

I once made a specific du’a. I asked Allah to give me permission and emotional strength to share my own personal life and faith experiences for His Sake to help other members of this ummah. And so I began to write and share personal reflections on social media. I shared a post on Instagram about the power of tahajjud and extended an invitation to others to see for themselves how miraculous du’a made at this time truly is. In the following days, I received so many messages from men and women who had made du’a at the time of tahajjud and their du’a had been answered at the speed of lightning. Fozia, a British-born South Asian woman in her early thirties who had been through a lot in her first marriage, was one of those who

came across my post and took action. She got in touch with me to tell me about her own miraculous tahajjud du'a story.

I was so excited to interview her, and it gave me so much joy to learn of the huge turnaround in her life. I felt over the moon for her, especially knowing the sacrifices she had made to provide stability for her three children. When we met to talk about her experiences, she told me how she had discovered tahajjud and embraced it with all that she had. The events that unfolded for her, just days after praying it, left me hungry to pray it more too.

Fozia's Story



Last year, it was coming to the end of my tenancy in a flat where I had lived for five years. I had a strong feeling my landlord would need his flat back or that he'd put up the rent. But I wasn't in a financial position to pay more rent. And I really didn't want to move out of the area as my children were settled in school. I began praying tahajjud about my housing situation. I made du'a and asked Allah to stop my landlord from increasing the rent and to allow us to stay. Or that Allah would provide a better outcome for us.

The first time I prayed tahajjud, I felt worried and desperate. I'd heard so many positive things about tahajjud and how it works, but then I thought: why for me? I'm not the most pious person. Would it really work for me the same as it worked for all these other people? A couple of days into praying tahajjud, I went to visit my parents and my dad just said to me, matter-of-factly, 'You need to start looking into buying a flat.'

I told him, 'Dad, I'm not in a financial situation to buy a flat.'

He said calmly and confidently, 'We'll deal with that later. Just find a flat.'

After that he kept on calling me, urging me to do it, so I started to look for one, just to make him happy. All the while, I kept praying

tahajjud every day.

A property came on to the market in the same block I was living in, and I had a viewing. The price was quite low as the seller wanted a quick sale. I did love the place – near my children's school and near my parents' house too. But I didn't have the money for it. Even with my dad encouraging me, how could I put in an offer?

After the viewing, my dad asked me: 'Do you want it?'

I replied, 'Yes, of course! But, Dad, I can't afford it.'

Dad reassured me: 'Fozia, do it. Don't worry, we'll deal with that later.'

With no money at all, I still put in an offer. It was lower than what others were bidding, so I wrote a letter along with it, telling the agent and seller that I hoped the flat was meant to be for me and my family, and how much it would mean to all of us.

I still carried on my tahajjud. I was feeling surer now that Allah could make what seems impossible possible for me. I was starting to believe all my prayers could come true. And this wasn't a small thing. This was a huge thing.

The estate agents called me back a few weeks later, telling me that my offer had been accepted and we could start the paperwork. Despite other potential buyers offering more money, the sellers said there was just something about me. I was over the moon about that, but also even more worried – I didn't have the money to back up the offer!

Again, I continued tahajjud. I also felt that even if I didn't get the outcome I wanted, what I was experiencing in tahajjud was special. It was unlike any other salah. It was a very private moment between me and God. Just me and God. I felt a strong connection, like I was being listened to, as though I was receiving a hug. I don't know how else to describe it. It was very comforting. I think I got addicted to that feeling.

I was constantly in between two states: the anxiety of how I was going to get the money for the flat, and the hope I had in Allah as I prayed tahajjud every night.

Then I decided to take a big step. I put my own savings – still only a fraction of the overall cost of the property – forward. Then my dad

put some money forward. Then all of a sudden, anyone who heard about the fact that I was interested in the property – friends of our family, relatives – started throwing money at me. I had a friend whose Hajj wasn't accepted that year due to the new Saudi 'lottery system'. She said, 'We've got forty to fifty thousand pounds – if you want it, you can have it.'

My brothers said, 'We have savings – you can have them.'

Then one of my dad's friends phoned, and Dad told him that he and our family and friends were trying to help me buy a flat. This friend said, 'Oh yeah, I've got money – I can help.'

It was really bizarre how everyone started offering money. Within a day, we got together the full value of the house. I'm not talking about a mortgage, because we were not in a position to get a mortgage: my husband's income wasn't enough to be accepted. We literally got all this cash together in a day and put the offer forward.

My du'a began to change and I started praying every day that the paperwork would be accepted. Then I received a phone call from the agent and he asked, 'Fozia, are you sitting somewhere comfortable? Are you ready for this?'

I was holding my breath.

Then he excitedly shouted, 'It's yours! You've got it! It's all signed.'

I just kept saying: 'Thank You, Allah. Thank You, Allah. I know this was You. Thank You, thank You.'

My new home was given to me in the first week of Ramadan. Between starting to pray tahajjud and having the keys in my hands was exactly two months. It was a miracle. I had no money. My initial du'a in tahajjud was praying for my landlord to not increase the rent – but Allah gave me something a million times better. I have fallen in love with tahajjud. I don't think I can ever stop.

When I look back to who I was before Allah guided me to practise tahajjud in my life, I had been praying five times a day. But I sometimes had some questions and doubts about my deen [religion]. But when I saw Allah perform such a miracle right in front of me, all doubts disappeared. There was no way this was a coincidence. It has made my faith so strong.

Sometimes shaytaan [the devil] can whisper, 'Maybe what you're believing in is wrong.' But I am now so firm in my belief since this miraculous transformative experience. Allah gave me a material response but also gave me much more: an increased connection with Him. I got way more than what I asked for. I was given the keys to my own flat, for which we were able to pay in cash outright! But I was also given the keys to tahajjud, which became a huge turning point in my faith.

Dear reader, it is my hope, through sharing Fozia's story, that you grab hold of the blessed opportunities that await you in the stillness of the night. There is power in du'a at tahajjud – grab hold of it.

Develop Your Du'a

Often, I find myself in awe of how much Allah understands how delicately human we are. And why would He not? He is The Creator. Truly, He is The Lord, Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem.

Your Lord knows how tiring life can become. He knows the hustle. He knows the pangs of the heart, the worries and concerns. He knows that you just need a moment to catch your breath. He knows that your giving is so often greater than your receiving. And with that knowledge, He has gifted you tahajjud. Tahajjud is a spiritual break away. It does not require you to book a ticket. You don't need to travel anywhere. You just need to take a step, albeit quite a tired one; but look what you get in return: a most special meeting with your Lord who descends to the lowest heaven to hear and respond to your request.

The value of making du'a at the best time

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> When a half or third of the night has passed, Allah descends to the lowest heaven, and He says: ‘My servants do not ask from anyone but Me. Who is asking Me that I might give him? Who is seeking My forgiveness that I might forgive him? Who is calling upon Me that I might answer him?’ This continues until the dawn rises.
>
> *Ibn Hibban*

Tahajjud is a moment of private intimacy between you and The Most Loving. Everyone around you is asleep. The streets and roads are quiet. Life has paused. There is a stillness and a calmness as the world retreats and there you are, standing before the Lord of the Worlds, imploring Him to answer your call. Dearest reader, anything of value has an element of difficulty attached to achieving its benefits. It is hard to wake up in the last part of the night at a time of deepest sleep, just before you naturally awake to pray Fajr and start your day.

But this part of the night is priceless. Allah descends. Subhana’Allah, your Lord descends! Knowing how difficult it is to catch this moment reveals it as a VIP invitation from The Most Glorious King. It is Allah who inspires you towards du’a. It is Allah who wakes you up from the comforts of your bed. It is Allah who wishes to crown you, as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> You must perform the night prayer, for it is the habit of the righteous who came before you. It brings you closer to your Lord, it expiates your evil deeds, and prevents you from sinning.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

The difference the best time makes to your du’a

Know this: if you want your du’a to be answered quickly as per the words of Imam Shafi, ‘The du’a made at tahajjud is like an arrow that does not

miss its target', then make this du'a first: 'O Allah, honour me with worshipping You during the last part of the night.'

And *when*, not *if*, it is answered, know that you are a winner. Your Lord has not only rushed to respond, He has promised that there are treasures that await you, reserved especially for you.

Ash-Shakur, The One who Appreciates, says:

> Their sides forsake their beds, as they call upon their Lord in fear and hope, and from what We have provided them, they spend. And so, no soul knows of the delights of the eyes that have been hidden for them, as reward for what they used to do.
>
> Surah As-Sajdah 32:16–17

Dear reader, I have a life-changing question for you to sit with and ponder deeply; If there's something you want so very much, you need to ask yourself: 'Why am I not waking up for tahajjud and making du'a for it?'

How making du'a in tahajjud deepens your relationship with Allah

Your tahajjud is a secret between you, a servant, and your Lord. And as a result, Allah ('azza wa jal) honours your secret by not revealing His Reward for you, a worshipper who forsook your sleep purely for the sake of His Love.

Ibn al-Qayyim says:

> Ponder over how, since they were keen to hide their acts of night prayer, He compensated them by offering them a hidden and unknown reward.
>
> *Haadil Arwaah*

Dearest reader, this is exciting. You are here in this life for one reason: to worship your Lord with the hope of being one with whom He is pleased and

who enters into Paradise. Just as the very act of praying in the last part of the night is an upgrade in your worship, Allah (‘azza wa jal) turns to you with an upgrade in your status and reward. What better accolade to aspire towards than this?

It’s Your Turn – Pray Tahajjud

The time is now. In the stillness of the night and as the world sleeps, enjoy the solitude of dialogue with your Rabb. Du’a at this time is like no other, so build this habit gently and gradually.

- Really feel how truly precious the time of tahajjud is for the soul. Yearn for it. Feel the desire to be in seclusion with Allah deep within your heart.
- Before you sleep, ask Allah to honour you with the invitation of tahajjud.
- Go to sleep early – you are about to attend the greatest VIP invitation you will ever receive.
- Set your alarm for thirty to forty-five minutes before Fajr.
- When you wake up the first few times, pace yourself: pray a little, speak to Allah a lot and make du’a, implementing the guidance found in the previous chapters and the chapters to come. But do so gradually. Remember that the goal is to make this a consistent practice in your life.
- And if you don’t wake up, know this: the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

  Whoever goes to bed while intending to pray later on in the night but is overcome by sleep until the next morning, he will be given the full reward according to his intention and his sleep would have been a charity from his Lord upon him.

  An-Nasaa’i and *Ibn Maajah*

- Repeat the above steps regularly and observe transformation – not just in your du’a but in your emaan, your relationship with Allah and your entire life.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

O Giver of gifts, I ask You to bestow upon me Your Most Generous Invitation in this dunya – to rise from my sleep, to leave the comforts of this world behind and to worship You in the most blessed part of the night, hoping for Your Acceptance, Forgiveness and a blessed position in the next world. As-Salaam, The Provider of Peace, I am in need of moments of serenity with You, where I can speak to You focused, still and without distraction. Rabbi, when I struggle to wake up, when my body calls me to sleep, take over and draw me to You. I want to be one of the few who experience Your Presence and Nearness. Al-Mujeeb, The One who Responds, answer this du’a of mine, for I have so many others I am desperate to bring to Your Door in the stillness of the night.

10

Good Deeds: Du’a in Disguise

Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) says:

‘Allah has promised those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, that for them there is forgiveness and a great reward.’

Surah Maidah 5:9

Dear reader, there are a number of keys within your possession that can unlock the doors to that which you seek – drawing you closer to Allah, whereupon He draws even closer to you. But they are not found in the shape of a key. For example, they do not have teeth that perfectly match the carved patterns of a lock. In fact, they can appear to be completely the wrong shape and size for that which you think you want and need. Nevertheless, these keys are perfect. They lead you to openings, blessings and so much more. They cannot be tangibly explained. They cannot be quantified. They hold no shape. But they are blessed, and guide a servant to further blessings when he or she asks – and even when he or she does not. And the best of these keys is the Qur’an.

This is what happened to my friend Zainab. She is a British East African woman who works in education, and who is beautiful both outwardly and inwardly, Allahumma barik (may Allah bless her). Her smooth, topaz skin always makes me wonder at what needs to change with my own skincare routine. It is a small sign of the effort she takes for her outer appearance. She always looks immaculate, Allahumma barik, her hijab and abaya crisply ironed, her bag matching her choice of outfit.

But her attention to detail for her appearance is nothing in comparison to that of her soul. I met Zainab when she was at university where I was delivering an Islamic lecture. She soon became one of my closest friends and though we rarely get to see each other, our hours-long phone conversations always leave me feeling emotionally and spiritually full. She inspires me. What I love about her story is that sometimes you need not ask Allah for what you want; other things 'speak' for you and make du'a on your behalf.

Zainab's Story



I was living in Egypt and I had finished my hifdh [memorising the Qur'an] after about six years. Once I completed it, my teacher planted the idea in my mind of applying for an ijazah, which is a licence authorising a person to transmit Qur'anic knowledge to others. Although it was completely unplanned and something I saw to be in the distant future, he kept encouraging me to do it. I wasn't actually seeking to get an ijazah at that time. I just wanted to memorise the Qur'an, understand it and connect to its wondrous meanings. To be offered the opportunity to become a part of the chain of the inheritors of the Qur'an was an honour.

I told my teacher, 'I'll do it, but I only have a month left in Egypt as my mum is ill and I need to return to the UK.'

The ijazah application exam was rigorous. When the time came, I thought my teacher, whom I'm comfortable with, would be the one to test me. I got ready and entered a small room which had a few tables and chairs in it. But suddenly I was faced with a completely different teacher testing me – a teacher I was actually petrified of. I had complete stage fright and I failed the exam.

It was a sad moment for me as I would only get to have one shot at it this time, and the next opportunity would be after I'd returned to the UK. I cried and was so disappointed with myself. I shouldn't

have tripped upon the areas I did! A friend advised me to pray istikharaa [the prayer for seeking guidance]. I said, 'I won't have enough time to do it again now. It's too tight.'

She still pushed me to pray it. So I did, and poured my heart out. I didn't know what the solution was. The Qur'an institute said I couldn't come back straight away and that I needed to revise and then sit the next exam – which would be too late, after I was due to return to the UK.

I made du'a and left it to Allah.

Three days later, I received a call from another friend who was also a Qur'an teacher. She needed a lift to a Qur'an centre, and she knew that I was familiar with the area where it was. I took her there, ready to wait outside for her, but she said: 'Come in with me, I want to meet a sheikh.'

I had no idea why she was going to this centre, but when I went inside with her, it turned out that I already knew the sheikh. He was the teacher of my teacher, well known for the Qira'aat [the various recitations of the Qur'an]. He was very passionate about the Qur'an and the deen [religion]. His speech was direct and the same power came across in the way he recited the Qur'an. I stood at the back of the room while the two of them talked, and she asked if she could do her ijazah with him. He needed to test her knowledge first, so he asked her to recite, and he agreed she could study for it. Then he turned to me and suddenly asked: 'What about you? Don't you want an ijazah too?'

I stuttered: 'Well, I, I … would like it. But I have to go back to England.'

'Where did you study?' he asked me.

I told him where, and I told him my sheikh's name. He exclaimed: 'Of course, he is my student!' He called my teacher right there and then to verify who I was. After he finished the call, he told me, 'I'm happy with your level.'

And that was it. There was no rigorous test. He didn't need me to jump through all the hurdles and tests, because he knew the system I had already been through with my teacher. It was such a blessing to

hear this, because it was the test that was making me nervous and throwing me off.

He instructed me to recite anything I wished to.

'Even Al-Fatiha?' I asked, hopefully.

He agreed. 'Yes. Recite Al-Fatiha.'

I recited. And that was my application test.

He asked me how long I had left in Egypt and I told him it was just over three weeks.

Then he said to me: 'Khalas [fine]. You have three weeks. In fact, for you, because of your tight deadline, I'll be here from Fajr prayer until night for five days, and then on Saturdays. Come to every single session until you finish the Qur'an and get your ijazah.'

I couldn't believe it. 'Subhana'Allah, just like that?' I asked. So I went for it. And this was my du'a – my istikharaa. I received my ijazah in three weeks and was able to leave the country a day or so later. It was truly a magnificent turn of qadr for me and one that I would cherish forever. It felt like a coordinated effort – Allah was weaving things together.

I couldn't see a way out and how it would happen. I had to have immense faith and let go. To have a du'a answered in such a way felt surreal. It made me feel so reassured and it strengthened my link with Allah. It definitely has motivated me to continue my life with confidence and gave me the feeling that Allah wanted this for me. He had my back, even if no one else did.

Develop Your Du'a

Through the good deeds we perform for His Sake and through the sacrifices we make in pursuit of becoming His beloved, He blesses us with more – to the extent that the very yearnings and du'a of our heart are answered. Because His Generosity is not restricted to giving; it manifests even when we are the ones giving. You could say this is just a return of appreciation, but I argue that it is not. It goes beyond that. It is us in our flawed state

imperfectly worshipping The One who is Perfect. And despite the little we do, Allah (azza wa jal) turns to us Generously without us having to even part our lips, raise our hands and ask for what we wish. He steps in before this and provides us with abundance, because of something we did for His Sake.

This is your Lord. Dear reader, there are acts of worship and good deeds that you perform purely out of servitude, not expecting a return or even a reward in this life. These acts of ibadah (worship) may be for the sake of Allah, yet they primarily benefit your own soul, for Allah is never in need. These acts and deeds are secret keys that open doors. They bring about barakah – extended blessings in your life – and one of these is answered du'a. These acts and deeds are therefore, in a way, du'a in disguise. Among these secret keys are:

- istighfaar – seeking Allah's Forgiveness
- dhikr – remembrances of Allah
- fasting
- halal rizq – permissible provision
- a relationship with the Qur'an

The value of doing good deeds and the difference they make to your du'a

Let's take a moment now to consider in more detail how these secret keys unlock your needs and wants.

Istighfaar

Allah says:

> Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send the sky upon you in showers. And give you

increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.

Surah Nuh 71:10–12

Dhikr

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, Allah said:

> To one who is too occupied in My Remembrance to supplicate Me, I give what is better than what I give to those who ask.

Sunan Tirmidhi

Fasting

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> When the fasting person breaks his fast, his supplication is not turned back.

Sunan Ibn Majah

Halal rizq

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> O people! Allah is Pure and, therefore, accepts only that which is pure. Allah has commanded the believers as He has commanded His Messengers by saying: ‘O Messengers! Eat of the good things, and do good deeds.’ (Surah 23:51) And He said: ‘O you who believe, eat of the lawful things that We have provided you’ (Surah 2:172).

> Then he (ﷺ) made a mention of the person who travels for a long period of time, his hair is dishevelled and covered with dust. He lifts his hand towards the sky and thus makes the supplication: ‘My Rabb! My Rabb!’ But his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothes are unlawful and his nourishment is unlawful. How can, then, his supplication be accepted?’
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

A relationship with the Qur’an

In the beautiful words of the Islamic teacher Ustadh Wahaj Tarin, the Qur’an is a key like no other:

> Whatever the Qur’an touches, Allah blesses and honours. The night on which the Qur’an was revealed became the best of nights. The month on which the Qur’an was revealed became the best of months. The Prophet on which the Qur’an was revealed became the best of Prophets. The angel through which the Qur’an was revealed became the best of angels. The nation on which the Qur’an was revealed became the best of nations.

How doing good deeds deepens your relationship with Allah

Allah (‘azza wa jal) says in a hadith qudsi:

> My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me with voluntary works until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.

Fath al-Bari

Dear reader, how can you ever despair of the Mercy of Allah or wonder whether your du'a will be answered when you have a Lord who loves you, influences your senses so you worship Him with ihsaan and answers your du'a? And all because you sought forgiveness from Him, remembered Him, fasted for Him, even ate that which He provided and recited and lived with His Words! Subhana'Allah! To do this for Him and to receive such a return makes you fall deeply in love with Him, developing your relationship with Him – touching your heart with an adoration for your Lord, who becomes your Absolute Beloved.

It's Your Turn – Perform Good Deeds

So, which of Allah's Favours and good deeds as du'a in disguise will you deny? To perform good deeds, you can begin with the following:

- Spend time researching acts of worship that open the doors to answered du'a. Make a list of these.
- Choose one of the acts of worship as a secret key that your heart inclines towards doing purely for the sake of Allah.
- Make a plan to throw your soul into performing this worship regularly. Correct your intention.
- Establish a meaningful relationship with the Qur'an through recitation, reflection and application.
- Outside du'a, keep your tongue moist with the dhikr of Allah, particularly that of istighfaar.

Allah, Transform My Du'a

Rabbi, my beloved Prophet (ﷺ) shared with his ummah a most beautiful du’a. My Lord, grant it to me:

> O Allah, I am Your slave, and the son of Your male slave, and the son of Your female slave. My forehead is in Your Hand (You have control over me). Your Judgement upon me is assured, and Your Decree concerning me is just. I ask You by every Name that You have named Yourself with, revealed in Your Book, taught any one of Your creation, or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You, to make the Qur’an the spring of my heart, and the light of my chest, the banisher of my sadness, and the reliever of my distress.
>
> *Sunan Ahmad*

Part 3:

THE DU'A

Dear reader, now – with a prepared heart – it is time.

The moment has arrived. It is time for your heart to inspire your words.

Just like composing a love letter, you will need time to string together your ideas, your emotions and your innermost state into meaningful words presented to your Beloved.

In this part of the book, you will discover tools to take your du'a to the next level. Sometimes this will teach you that your du'a of so very few words, but with such great depth of meaning, can quickly ascend towards the heavens. At other times, a longer dialogue will be required between you and your Lord.

I invite you to discover examples, tools and suggestions to help you develop the quality of your du'a.

11

Praise Allah

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

'No one loves to be praised more than Allah Almighty, and no one accepts more excuses than Allah Almighty.'

Al-Tabaraani, Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir

One of the greatest tragedies experienced by the human heart is the wrench of unreciprocated love. The efforts you afford the one you love are unprecedented. You do everything within your power to show them what they mean to you – but despite such efforts, what you offer is neither accepted nor reciprocated. Actions become futile. Words hold no meaning.

For those who suffer the pangs of this heartache, the solution is found through words offered to another beloved, the True Beloved. There are words that can guide you through the pain – words of praise, appreciation and love, as we will come to see in Khalid's story. Khalid is a father of six children whom he adores. As he is a respected imam in the Muslim community, parents often call upon him to help them deal with dysfunctional relationships with their children. But it was only when his relationship with his teenage daughter fell apart that he learned the power of words directed to the One who always accepts and values them.

Khalid shares the story about the heartache of losing his close bond with his daughter and how the words that he took to his Lord made the real difference.

Khalid's Story



I love all of my children, but there was always a special place in my heart for my eldest daughter. We were always very close, so when I lost that closeness it was devastating. She refused to speak to me for eight months – not a single word. And in her actions, she became very aggressive towards me. Every time we would go out, she wouldn't speak to me or her mum. I put it down partly to her going through puberty, but also because I had left the country for a year due to work commitments. It could be that she felt I betrayed her by leaving as, prior to this, she was so attached to me.

Over time, her behaviour and attitude spiralled out of control. My lovely daughter became a problem for all of us in the family. She was illogical about everything. Sadness on my part became anger.

But still, I did everything to claim her back. She was my heart. We were so close. I tried to reach her through gifts, trips abroad and giving her my time. But nothing worked. I felt hopeless. There was nothing I could do. I was so sad to experience something I never imagined would happen to me. I knew she needed the closeness and guidance of her parents, but she kept blocking us. And then she began to question her faith. Her practice of Islam began to disappear, with no way for me to even discuss it with her. It was a difficult time. I felt like I was losing my dear daughter.

As an imam, I was the one others would call and ask for help, guidance and support when their own children were losing their way in life and in their religion. But when it happened to me, I was confused. I really did not understand what was going on.

I asked my friends. I sought the advice of other people. But no one could offer me any comfort. I reached a point where I knew that no one could help me except Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] I began to tell Him: 'I have no power over the situation. O Allah, I am powerless. I don't have anything in my hands.'

I kept repeating this to Allah, along with: 'La hawla wa la quwwatta illa Billah' – 'There is no power and no strength except with Allah.'

*I just kept praising Allah by His Ability – Qudra. I would tell Him: '**Al Qadir ala kulli shay** – O Allah, You are The Most Powerful; You are able to do anything. **O Allah**, **Anta Qadir** – You are The All-Powerful. **Anta Qadri ala kulli shay** – You are The Most Powerful over everything.' I praised Allah and invoked Him by His Power over all that exists.*

This strengthened me mentally and spiritually. I was powerless and I knew I needed to really beg Allah to take this forward. I couldn't do any more. As soon as I finished the du'a, I felt a little bit of comfort deep in my heart. I had taken what was heavy on my shoulders and handed it over to Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala]. I no longer felt the anger, frustration and sadness after that du'a. That was the best gift. I felt comforted, Alhamdulillah, I had done what I could and now it was in the Hands of Allah.

One day, I took all of my children to Richmond Park in South-West London to see the deer. We were trying to feed them, when suddenly my daughter stood close to me for the first time in a very long time, and gave me some grass for the animals. It was a beautiful, simple moment.

I did not rush to utilise that moment to get her back. I was calm. I remembered I had fully accepted to leave it all to Allah. I knew then that my personal effort, though made before, was not what would really bring about change.

My daughter slowly started to come back to us. She would sit in the same room as us rather than in her own room. She would eat with the rest of the family. Maybe my decision to step back had given her space. But I didn't mind how slow it was. I was grateful she was returning. The ease between us started to come naturally, without my effort. This entire situation taught me a big lesson. It was only when I reached a point where I was forced to give up on human help – when I had no choice to consider anything except Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] – that the ease came. It isn't our first thought to shift a problem immediately to Allah, acknowledging His Qudra – His

Power, to bring us the solution. But we should do so. Because He will bring what He Knows is perfect; in my case, it came on a sunny day while feeding deer.

Sometimes Allah takes all possible solutions away to make you realise this. This is what Khalid had been able to discover.

Develop Your Du’a

There are countless reasons why your soul needs to praise your Merciful Creator. You are His servant and despite the fact that He gives you the world, you fall short in your very purpose: to worship Him. You may feel tired, overworked, stressed, sad and even lazy, and yet He accepts your excuses and grants you permission to keep breathing and trying imperfectly for His Sake. Is this not a reason to offer Him sincere praise? Is this not a reason for your eyes to lower in humility and your heart to break before Him? This level of awareness of who Allah is with you is the oxygen your soul breathes in. And then the awakened soul breathes out praise of Allah. That praise becomes unconscious and automatic – so much a part of your life that it is your immediate go-to when you turn to du’a.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> When one of you makes du’a, he should start off with praising and glorifying his Lord …
>
> *Sunan Abu Dawud*

Khalid repeatedly expressed his belief that his problem would not be truly solved until he understood and accepted that this could only happen through Allah alone – not through anything he did. By removing all human intervention from the equation, Allah forced the eyes of Khalid’s soul to see that He is and will always be the First and the Last. Khalid was provided with this awareness – oxygen for his soul. And once this happened, he was forced to exhale praise and thanks to his Rabb, in this case related to His

Power. And because Allah loves to be praised, that is when He answered Khalid's du'a. This also led Khalid to something more – to Allah's Love, His Comfort and the feeling of being lovingly protected. That feeling right there is the Special Rahma (Mercy) that Ar-Raheem provides for His servants. A du'a may be answered, but to be drawn ever so near to the Lord of the Heavens and Earth is the biggest win.

The value of praising Allah for your du'a

Praise of Allah is a treasure, such that the angels precede their own du'a with praise by saying:

> Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in Mercy and Knowledge …
>
> Surah Ghafir 40:7

Praise of Allah is a treasure, such that the hadith of intercession describes the believers who ask various Prophets to intercede for them with Allah (ʿazza wa jal). When the Prophets refuse, the believers approach the Messenger (ﷺ), who will be given permission to present himself before Allah (ʿazza wa jal). The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> When I will see my Lord, I will fall down in prostration before Him and He will leave me in prostration as long as He wishes, and then it will be said to me: 'O Muhammad! Raise your head and speak, for you will be listened to; and ask, for you will be granted your request; and intercede, for your intercession will be accepted.' I will then raise my head and praise my Lord with certain praises which He will inspire me, and then I will intercede.
>
> *Sahih Bukhari*

Subhana'Allah! The angels, who have no need of Allah's Mercy because they were created to obey their Lord, praise Allah. The Prophet (ﷺ) who

has been guaranteed Paradise praises Allah. The flawed and imperfect believers who are granted Jannah and have made it there – they have won the ultimate prize – also praise Allah, as described by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ):

> The inhabitants of Paradise … will praise and glorify Allah as easily as you breathe.
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

Allah (‘azza wa jal) says:

> Their call therein will be ‘How Perfect You are, O Allah’ and their greeting therein will be ‘Peace’ and the end of their call will be ‘Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.’
>
> Surah Yunus 10:10

If the angels, the Prophet (ﷺ) and the people of Jannah all praise Allah, then what about you, dear reader? How often do your lips part only to utter words of thanks and praise?

If this does not move you to your soul’s urgent need to praise your Rabb, then let me share a most beautiful hadith with you:

> Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: He was sitting with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) while a man was praying, and then he supplicated: ‘O Allah, I ask You by virtue of all praise belonging to You. There is no God but You, the Beneficent, the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth. O Majestic and Generous, O Living, O Sustainer!’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘He has called upon Allah by His greatest name, by which He will answer when called and give when asked.’
>
> *Sunan Abu Dawud*

The difference praising Allah makes to your du’a and your relationship with Him

Dearest reader, your du’a is answered by the manner in which you praise the One you are asking. And as Khalid’s story shows us, one of the shortest and most effective ways to praise Allah is through a simple yet strong statement: ‘*La hawla wa la quwatta illa Billah*’ – ‘There is no might or power except with Allah.’ The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Shall I not teach you a statement which lies beneath the Throne and is from the treasures of Paradise? Say La hawla wa la quwatta illa Billah, upon which Allah says: ‘My slave has submitted and surrendered himself.’
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

Dear reader, praise your Lord as He is to be praised, until praise of Him becomes natural and easy on your tongue. Then incorporate this statement during your du’a. And know that the scholars have said that the very reason why this statement is a treasure of Paradise is because it embodies full submission and total trust and reliance upon Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala); treasures of the heart that lead to the treasures of the eternal world.

It’s Your Turn – Praise Allah

> Remembrance of Allah is for the heart like water is for fish.
>
> Ibn Taymiyyah

Remember your Lord, and then praise Him. Dear reader, purchase a small notebook or create a document on your phone titled ‘Praise of Allah’. In it, store the most beautiful praises of Allah you can incorporate into your du’a through the following means:

- The praises Allah has accorded Himself. Set yourself a weekly time to read through the Qur'an in a translation you understand, noting the way Allah has praised Himself.
- Praise your Lord as the Prophets and Messengers praised him, and especially as the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) praised Him. Add these to your notebook or document.
- Praise Him in the way the companions and pious predecessors praised Him. Include these, as they were of the best of generations.
- Think of who He is to you and what He has done for you, and write down your own raw words of praise of Him. These don't need to be note-perfect; your intention is what matters.
- Praise Him through His Beautiful and Perfect Names (see Chapter 12).

In addition to the development of your Praise notebook, keep praise on your tongue by engaging in dhikr, especially during waiting moments: during travel, at the dentist waiting for an appointment, while cooking, while walking … Don't let your tongue be idle. Keep it moist with the praise of Allah.

Allah, Transform My Du'a

O Allah, I feel shy. You are Al-Hamid, Al-Majid – The One to be Praised and Glorified. There is none worthy of praise but You. I know that I do not praise You as much as You deserve. I know I can never praise You in the way that You deserve. But although my worship will never be enough, I do so and commit myself to doing so out of servitude and submission to You. Place a light in my heart so that it may know and see clearly how to praise You. Make me aware of who You are and how You interact with me, so that I cannot help but use every conscious waking moment to praise You. Guide me to so much praise of You that the angels become familiar with my voice

and know that it belongs to a servant who frequently offers loving praise for You.

12

Call Upon Allah by His Beautiful Names

> *The greatest misfortune that can ever befall a person is to have missed out on the sweetest feeling in this life: to deeply know Allah and to experience an intimate exchange of your love for Him and His Love for you.*
>
> *Aliyah Umm Raiyaan*

I asked the following question on Instagram: ‘Why do you love Allah?’ Of all the responses, the following stood out:

> I love Him, but He loved me first. No matter what’s happening in my life, when I pause and zoom out, I perceive that He’s there behind it all. He wants good for me … if I don’t get it now, I can rest in the knowledge that He knows, even when I get weary. He sends me signs that warm me up inside, that pour steadying faith into my heart, that allow me to further know Him. I love Him, but He loved me first and guides me.

The reason why I chose this out of the many responses I received is because of the words ‘but He loved me first’. This was a servant of Allah who knew her Lord and understood the depths of manifested love that Al Wadood – The Most Loving – has for His servants.

Dear reader, let me introduce you to Alice. Alice is an English revert to Islam in her forties. (The term ‘revert’ refers to someone who has turned to

Islam and has chosen to adopt Islam as their religion and way of life. It is used because we believe every person is born upon fitrah, the natural inclination to worship one Creator, so those of us who become Muslim are simply reverting to that natural state.) She was raised in English culture and has maintained this although she has been Muslim for many years. Alice is a friend of mine. She works hard to be a loving mother to her three children. Knowing how much her children mean to her, I felt so distressed and angry for her when she shared with me a deep trial that she and her family endured, and I should warn you that her story mentions details of abuse that some readers may find distressing.

Alice's Story



A number of years ago, my family and I went through our biggest test to date. A family member sexually abused my daughter when she was a child. The case went to court. Due to the devastating psychological impact on my daughter, I became her carer, which meant I could not work. I was receiving welfare benefits and applied for legal aid to ensure that this family member could no longer have access to my daughter. The legal case took two and a half years.

It was during this time that the government decided to give people on benefits a further helping hand during the Covid-19 pandemic, with an extra £20 per week more than they normally received. It was a small increase in my income, but it helped me.

All thanks to Allah, we won the case. It was a huge relief after years of fighting for justice. We moved house to make a fresh start. But a year after the case had closed, I suddenly received a letter in the post from Legal Aid, informing me that I owed them £30,000. I was in complete shock and kept thinking there must have been a mistake. How on earth could I be £30,000 in debt? Surely there must have been an error. I can't tell you, I can hardly find the words for how I felt.

The Legal Aid department explained to me that during a particular month of my legal case, I had not been entitled to their help due to an increase in my income from benefits. This had been the extra payment during Covid-19. They had been trying to get hold of me for some time to tell me this, but didn't have my new address. I'd had no idea that I had crossed over the threshold for receiving legal aid. I tried to reason with them: 'But if I'm just over the threshold in that one month, how on earth do you think I can afford to pay this back? I would have stopped the extra benefit payment if I'd known!'

But nothing I said made any difference. They had every legal right to order me to pay them the money and I had no idea what to do. I was numb and in shock, and hit an all-time low.

Next, they requested a breakdown of my income and assets. I didn't have any income, of course. They told me they could help me with a debt repayment plan. I could see I would be paying it off for the rest of my life. I'm not someone who does debt. I'm old school – old-fashioned. Never in my life have I owed anything. Not even 10p! My parents raised me to save and taught me that when you have enough from your savings, that is when you can go and spend. I couldn't see a way out. I knew only Allah could help me.

Legal Aid informed me I could put in an appeal. I did that, but I knew my chances were slim. I felt it was so unfair. What was I doing? I wasn't taking out a loan for a car. I was fighting to protect my daughter. I began to make du'a: 'Show me a way,' I told Allah. 'Help me.'

I turned to Allah in tahajjud and I called Him by His Name Al-Fattah – The One who Opens a Way. I tend to use Allah's Names a lot when I make du'a and choose them specifically depending on the situation. My hope, when praising and calling upon Him by His Names, is that I will call upon His Quality and Attribute in the hope that my du'a would be answered by it. Only He had the power to open a new door in what seemed like an impossible situation. I said: 'Allah, it seems as though every possible door is closed to me. I cannot see a way through. But I know You make anything possible. I

hand this over to You and I trust in You. Al-Fattah, You open any door. You find a way when there seems like there's no way.'

My words were simple. My heart was making du'a – calling upon Al-Fattah, The One who Opens Doors. That's what carried the weight.

I swear by Allah that as soon as I did this, a peace came over me. It was like – it doesn't matter. I accepted whatever He would decree for me. Even if I had to pay the money back, look at what Allah has gifted to me in my life. Subhana'Allah. What is this debt? It's nothing. Yes, I'll pay it back over the next thirty years, but look what Allah has blessed me with outside this – I have all these other blessings. I have so much! As long as I have Allah, what does it matter?

As soon as all of this registered in my heart, Al-Fattah opened the door. Within two weeks of making du'a, a Legal Aid guy emailed me: 'I've looked at your case. We were trying to get hold of you through your solicitors for a year and a half but couldn't contact you. They hadn't forwarded your new address to us and so for this reason, we are willing to waive the debt.'

My jaw dropped. I read the email, then read it again, questioning if I understood what he was saying correctly. I emailed him back asking for clarification: 'Are you saying that you are going to wipe it all out?'

He replied: 'Yes.'

I cried. I turned to Allah, because I knew it was from Him. Even though I thanked the man kindly, there was more gratitude to Allah because I knew Allah facilitated this. I had exhausted human intervention, so I knew this was Divine intervention.

I said to Allah, 'Here You are, looking after me again and again and again.'

Huge relief came over me, along with immense gratitude. I felt His Loving Care for me just as He had cared for me all along. He had chosen not to answer my du'a straight away and to wait until I had surrendered to His Decree. Alhamdulillah for granting me that closeness and opening what seemed like an impossible door.

Develop Your Du’a

Dearest reader, one of the best ways to praise Allah and call upon Him is by using His Beautiful Names. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Allah has ninety-nine Names. Whoever preserves them will enter Paradise.
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

This hadith is often understood as referring to memorising Allah’s Names. But the scholars have also spoken of the inner spiritual dimension of doing so. The best way to memorise and preserve them is through living with them. And how can you live with Allah’s Names? Through knowing Him by them, loving Him because of them and finding Him, in the days of your life, through them. The more you develop your understanding of Allah’s Names, the more you will witness Allah interacting with you through His Attributes. And the more this happens, the more you will seek Him (‘azza wa jal) by His Beautiful Qualities – which draws you closer to your Lord.

The value of calling upon Allah’s Beautiful Names for your du’a

When you know your Lord, that is when you will have no other choice but to call on Him, because you know with certainty who He is and will be during and after your du’a. And know dear reader, the knowledge of your Lord will increase your love for Him (‘azza wa jal).
The following verse in the Qur’an also points to this:

> And Allah’s names are the best names, so call on Him …
>
> Surah Al-Araf 7:180

The difference calling upon Allah's Names makes to your du'a

There is a beautiful hadith that shows how using Allah's Names in du'a will lead to it being answered:

> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) heard a man saying: 'O Allah, I ask You as I bear witness that You are Allah, there is no god but You, The One, The Self-Sufficient Master, Who has not given birth and was not born, and to Whom no one is equal.
>
> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) remarked: 'By the One in Whose Hand is my life, He has certainly asked Allah with His Greatest Name; when He is supplicated by it, He responds, and when asked, He gives.'
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

How calling upon Allah by His Names deepens your relationship with Him

Dearest reader, look at the generosity of Allah. When you know Him through His Beautiful Names and experience Him by His Names, you find Him in everyday moments where you might say: 'Ah, Al-Mubeen is the One who made it clear to me what someone's true intentions were. He protected me', or, 'Ar-Razzaq is the One who facilitated the success of my job interview.'

This level of knowing Allah drives you to make du'a like someone who confidently runs to their best friend, knowing he or she will listen and offer the best advice. Learning and living with Allah's Names develops a kind of mental vision board for your du'a. Outside du'a, when you see, for example, how Al-Fattah – The One who Opens a Way – has opened a certain door for you, this will add an image to your vision board that you

can recall when praising and calling upon Him in du’a. It will add to your certainty that He is and will be Al-Fattah again for the next new door that you need opening. And this will completely transform your interactions and, indeed, relationship with The Most High.

It’s Your Turn – Praise and Ask of Him by His Names

If you are not calling upon Allah by His Names, then who is He to you in your du’a? Here are some things you can do to call upon Him by His Beautiful Names:

- Study and memorise the names of Allah. Take this gradually, learning one or two each week.
- As you go about life, find His Names and Attributes in your everyday moments.
- To solidify your understanding of His Names, ask yourself: ‘How can I be more (Name and Attribute of Allah) towards myself and others?’
- At the beginning of your du’a, praise your Lord and incorporate His Names into your praise.
- Each week, call upon His Names in your du’a in sujood for your everyday needs.
- As your knowledge and application of Allah’s Names develops, think carefully about your needs or requests in each week and choose the Name of Allah that corresponds accordingly. Visualise what your Lord can do for you in your situation through His Qualities and Attributes.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Al-Mujeeb – The One who Responds to Du’a – I need You to answer my du’a. Your Messenger (ﷺ) said: ‘Supplicate frequently with “O Lord of Majesty and Honour”.’ I praise You by all of Your Beautiful Names and Attributes – the ones You have revealed and concealed. My Lord of Majesty and Honour, I want to know You. I want to know You so intimately that I love You and make the choice to live with You as my Most Intimate Companion. O Lord of Majesty and Honour, I am following the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ) and making du’a to You with these Names, because I know Your help to learn, preserve and live by Your Beautiful Names will lead me to You. And there is nothing that my heart yearns for more than to be near You in this life, with the hope that nearness will place me under Your Throne, in the highest part of Paradise, in the next life. Guide me to see who You are, by Your Beautiful Names outside du’a, so that when I need You desperately in my du’a, I find You.

13

Send Salawaat Upon the Prophet (ﷺ)

Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: If any one of you wants to ask (of Allah), let him begin by praising Allah as He deserves to be praised, then let him send blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then let him ask after that, for that is more likely to be answered.

Al-Tabaraani

When I lived in North Africa for a number of years, there was a concept called 'ma'rifa'. It means 'someone you know'. Using someone you know as a way to get things done is the only way to survive in certain countries. Mentioning that you know so-and-so helps you move forward even with something as simple as sorting out a dental appointment. There is a special form of ma'rifa with Allah. And the person whom we know is none other than the Prophet (ﷺ). Mentioning him to Allah in our du'a takes our du'a to Allah without any obstacles en route – as you will come to discover. My own du'a changed when I came across a hadith about salawaat (sending peace and blessings upon the Prophet, ﷺ) and du'a, as I will explain.

My Story



I have told this du'a story so many times, and sharing it now is an absolute must, too. For this book would not be possible unless Allah had answered my du'a.

My mother graduated as a mature student with the Open University. Her favourite modules were English Literature. My earliest childhood memories were seeing the excitement on her face when she received her textbooks in the post for the upcoming year of study. She encouraged me to write – so I did. I dreamed that one day I would be a published author.

I became Muslim. Life happened – and happened quite harshly in the first few years of my Islam. My parents were not happy with my decision and I even found myself homeless at one point, but that's another story. Those years of survival meant that I stopped writing. My publishing dream gathered dust. It was only when life settled at last that I picked up my pen. Writing became a form of therapy, and part of the construction of my faith itself as I penned reflections about my life and my journey to Allah ('azza wa jal).

I was making du'a. But something changed when I came across a powerful statement by the companion Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, which states:

Verily, the supplication is suspended between the Heavens and the Earth. Nothing ascends from it until you send blessings upon your Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

Sunan Tirmidhi

As soon as I read this, my every du'a changed. Though it is not obligatory to send salawaat in every du'a, I became very conscious of any du'a that lacked the salawaat and soon I could not invoke Allah without it. Any du'a I would make started off with praise of Allah, using His Exquisite Names during the praise, and then I mentioned the salawaat. And if I had begun to ask for my need but had forgotten the salawaat, I ensured that I went back and included it. Such was my need for my du'a to never be blocked!

In the Ramadan of 2022, there was one du'a that was on my tongue more than any other. It was this: 'Allah, You are The Only One who deserves praise. You are Al-Hadi – The One who Guides. O Allah, send prayers and peace upon my prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Forgive me for my shortcomings, ya Rabbi. You are Al-Afuuw, The One who Pardons – pardon me. Rabbi, I want to write and publish a book before I leave this world. I want it to be a book that draws people's hearts to You. Through this book, I want them to fall in love with You and to live for You. Guide and bring to me whatever I need to achieve this, if it is good for me. And if it is good for me, then allow for this book to be held by hands in corners of the world that I have not visited yet. O Allah, send prayers and peace upon my prophet. You are The All-Powerful. Everything is possible with You. La ilaha ila Anta – there is none worthy of worship except You.'

Two months after Ramadan 2022, I received a message in my Requests Folder on Instagram. I hadn't checked that folder for nearly a year, but something pushed me to do so that day. I began to scroll and landed on a message from a woman who had a non-Muslim name. As a revert, I was used to receiving questions about Islam from non-Muslims, so I opened her message. It said: 'Hi, I'm a publisher from Penguin Random House and would love to talk to you about the possibility of working together on a book. Please let me know if you'd be interested.'

I read and re-read the message for about fifteen minutes. I googled the publishing house and confirmed that it was one of the five largest in the world. I then began to wonder if the message was a hoax. In the modern world, things like that do happen! I'd heard stories that made me cautious, so I responded: 'Hi. Just read your message. Interested to learn more. Please can you email some further information.'

At that point, I did not – I could not – believe this was a message from a legitimate publisher reaching out to little old me to write and publish a book. When I received the email, I immediately clicked on the sender's email address. And lo and behold, it was a real Penguin Random House email address! I sat back in my chair in complete

shock. This was real. Only two months after I had intensified my du'a, ensuring the salawaat was plentiful within it, Allah, Al-Hadi, guided the publisher to me.

During my first meeting with my publisher, I asked her two burning questions: How did you find me? What do you want me to write about?

Her reply sent shivers down my spine: 'I came across a number of different writers' social media accounts. I came across yours and then I moved onto another profile. But something kept drawing me back to you. And you have freedom to write what you want in your book, but we are interested in you writing something connected to Ramadan in some way, to be published just ahead of next Ramadan.'

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. We were talking on a video call, and I looked at her on the screen and said: 'You're asking me to write a book connected to Ramadan, to be published ahead of Ramadan, when just two months ago, in Ramadan, I prayed to my Lord to bless me with the opportunity to write and publish a book.'

That book was published in March 2023 and, by Allah's Permission, it went on to become a Sunday Times *bestseller. But what brings tears to my eyes today is that Allah answered the part of my du'a where I said 'allow this book to be held by hands in corners of the world that I have not visited yet.' Due to the fact that this was a mainstream international publisher, within weeks, Alhamdulillah, I began to receive tags from readers on Instagram holding my book in many corners of the world – in the US, in Malaysia, in Africa, in Australia, in the Maldives and more.*

Develop Your Du'a

Dear reader, I must once again highlight the statement of Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, which is considered to be marfoo (regarded as attributable to the Prophet, (ﷺ), who said:

> Verily, the supplication is suspended between the Heavens and the Earth. Nothing ascends from it until you send blessings upon your Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

The value of sending salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) for your du’a

Over the years since I first embraced Islam, I have discovered wisdom upon wisdom in Islamic rulings, guidance and statements. And it has produced a curiosity within me, such that when I read the statement of Umar ibn al-Khattab, I knew there must be a reason why salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) is so crucial to du’a. I wondered what this might be. And knew that it must lie in the virtue and/or benefit for our imperfect selves. Of the possible reasons, we find that Allah says in the Qur’an:

> Indeed, Allah showers His blessings upon the Prophet, and His angels pray for him. O believers! Invoke Allah’s blessings upon him, and salute him with worthy greetings of peace.
>
> Surah Al-Ahzab 33:56

Sending salawaat upon the Prophet is so praiseworthy that Allah honours him (ﷺ) by doing so and the angels whose sole purpose is to obediently worship Allah do so too.

The value of salawaat is huge. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever sends salawaat upon me once, will be blessed by it tenfold, erased by it ten sins, and raised by it ten degrees in status.
>
> *Sunan al-Nasa’i*

> Send the salawaat upon me, for verily it is a purification for you.

The difference salawaat makes to your du’a

Du’a is the call of the imperfect servant in an imperfect world, which is taken up to the Perfect Lord upon His Perfect Throne. As a form of purification, salawaat removes barriers between your du’a and your Lord. Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd wrote in his book *Tasheeh al-Du’a*:

> The best category of sending blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is at the beginning of the du’a, in the middle and at the end. It is like wings for the du’a with which it soars up to the clouds of the sky.

Dear reader, your du’a has its own journey to Allah (‘azza wa jal). Allow it to be carried through salawaat.

How sending salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) deepens your relationship with Allah

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘Du’a is worship’ (Sunan Abu Dawud). Imagine that, subhana’Allah! Your time of need and yearning is worship and thus rewardable. And within this act of worship is extended reward, because when you strive in your du’a for it to be accepted by sending salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) you are rewarded even further, subhana’Allah.

Dear reader, how can you ever despair of your du’a not being answered when you have a Lord who Listens to your du’a, treats it as worship and rewards you even further when you aim through salawaat for it to never be obstructed from reaching your Lord? Truly, Allah is Most Kind, Most Generous. Whatever your prayer is – whatever it is you need or want from your Lord – make your du’a fly.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> When any one of you prays, let him begin by praising Allah, then let him send blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then let him ask for whatever he wants.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

And in my own case, the answer I received led to the very book you are reading right now.

It's Your Turn – Send Salawaat

We are living for Allah, through the life and example of the Prophet (ﷺ). So let us send prayers and blessings upon him.

- Dedicate yourself to reading through the seerah (the life of the Prophet, ﷺ).
- Every morning and evening, as part of the adhkaar (morning and evening remembrances), send salawaat upon your beloved Nabi (Prophet, ﷺ).
- Memorise the salawaat and during any moments of waiting or idleness, aim to be forgiven, rewarded and for your status to be elevated through sending salawaat upon him (ﷺ).
- After praising Allah and calling upon Him by His Names, send salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and then make du'a for whatever you need.
- Store this in your memory:

> Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: 'The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "The closest of people to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who sent the most blessings upon me."'
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Allah, Transform My Du’a

O Allah, never let me forget that the journey of my soul and its worship for You can only ever be through the life and example of your Final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ). Al-Hadi, The One who Guides, place within my heart this sense of urgency to learn more and more about his life, his way, his character (ﷺ). Increase my love for him (ﷺ) such that my heart inclines towards sending abundant salawaat upon him. My Lord, as much as I can, remind me to send salawaat upon him in my du’a. You are not a Lord who deprives Your servant. Rather You provide and You do so Abundantly. Do not suspend my du’a. I need You. I need Your Response. Make my tongue mention the prayers and blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) from a place of love and reverence for him, because I know You love him. And through loving him, I hope You will love me.

14

Seek Forgiveness

‘All of the children of Adam are sinners, and the best sinners are those who repent.’

Sunan Tirmidhi

We are all sinners, sinning differently. And we will continue to sin until our graves. Dear reader, I invite you to shift your focus to what you do *after* Allah grants you the awareness that you have turned away from Him, and that you need to return. Sin interferes with the journey of du’a. But the key is what happens after you repent, and Allah grants you His Forgiveness and turns to you …

The story in this chapter is also mine and it’s one I love to tell.

My Story



When I embraced Islam in 1999, I thought that my life would be smooth sailing from then on. But I was naïve. For the first two years after taking my shahaadah (the declaration of faith), I was tested in ways that hurt me physically, emotionally and psychologically. I was sixteen years old when I became Muslim. Combined with my adolescence, I struggled – and struggled hard. Having embraced Islam within what I now feel was a sect, I made very poor decisions

under that group's influence. I ended up without a home due to parents who were more than unhappy with those decisions. I had to give up my studies and find a job to put a roof over my head and food in my mouth. And at the end of that highly stressful period, I found myself living in a refuge hundreds of miles away from anyone I knew.

Due to the amount of battering pressure my soul had experienced, I lost all will to practise Islam. This wasn't due to Islam itself – I had become a Muslim from a place of rational conviction and chose it for myself. My problems had been caused by some of the people who followed the religion, not the religion itself, which originates from a Merciful and Loving God. One day, while lying in bed in a hospital in the North of England, and recovering from an operation due to a suspected life-threatening condition, I phoned my mother. I had become estranged from her, but now I begged her to come and collect me and bring me home.

The day I walked through the front door of my mother's home, I decided I needed a break from Islam. I didn't realise that what I truly needed was a break from the people I'd been with, from the heartache, the lack of support, the challenges and trials.

So I distanced myself from Islam by placing all the Islamic literature in my possession into a box and taping it shut. I changed my telephone number so that no one I knew from before could reach me, and thus any reminder of Islam was eradicated from my life. Once my physical health stabilised, I moved to North London and flat shared with three other women, working as a secretary in a firm of accountants. I returned to my old lifestyle, still a Muslim in mind and heart, but not in practice. However, no one would have known I was a Muslim unless I told them.

But after a while, I began to feel empty. There was a void and nothing that I tried could fill that void. I began to feel the need to fill it with the only thing that would work – with a connection and relationship with my Creator.

Slowly, I started coming back to my Lord and to Islam. It started simply by talking to Him. Telling Him what I had been through, alone and unsupported. Telling Him how difficult it had been to

navigate the changes amongst the storms that were sent my way. My words turned into tears, for not having been strong enough and falling into so many mistakes and sin. And that became a part of my daily life: talking to Him and asking Him to forgive me. I found immense comfort in both, and would often enjoy long walks through the park, talking to Him as though He was right by my side.

During this time, I was still involved with things that were not pleasing to Allah. But I kept up my du'a, with one du'a on my tongue more than others: 'O Allah, I need stability. I'm lonely. I want to have a Muslim family of my own.' I continued to make this du'a, but as time went on, I began to feel its complete opposite: more instability than I had ever experienced before, and a loneliness so deep that I would cry myself to sleep alone in my room.

It was only when I made a conscious decision to stop doing certain things and truly turn to Allah in repentance that things began to change. I began to feel stable within myself emotionally. I found stability in my religion – and took a balanced approach this time. Some of the sweetest times I can ever recall since embracing Islam took place during that period: wrapping my hair Erykah Badu style as I began the journey back to hijab for the sake of my Lord; reading a page of Qu'ran in English every day and contemplating it; smiling as I walked, because inside I was smiling and happy. I was finding myself and finding Him.

Making tawbah was when I began to change internally. And when that happened, my du'a was answered. After some time, I was introduced to a man who became my husband, with whom I gave birth to our first daughter ten months after getting married. I was given my Muslim family.

Develop Your Du'a

In the period of my life that I have described, I experienced how sin can impede us on our journey to the next world, and how repentance can repair

this damage. But what exactly is sin, and how does it cause so much harm?

This life is a bridge to Jannah (insha'Allah – God willing) in the next world, where you will find tranquillity, comfort and joy. And du'a is also a bridge, which takes your worldly needs to a Lord with whom you will find mercy, solace and peace. The way you build your bridge is so very important. Every plank of wood must be placed at the perfect distance from the next, solid and secure. Sometimes, though, the bridge may weaken due to your own doing: misplaced planks, or even choosing not to lay some down, thinking you can skip the building process. The end result? You end up walking unsteadily. Then you trip and fall. When such mistakes are made and their effect is felt, it's only logical to learn, to rectify, to fix the bridge – to place new planks and replace the old.

Du'a also has its planks: knowing Allah, vulnerability, sincerity, expectations of Allah, certainty, utilising the best times for du'a, good deeds, praise of Allah, sending salawaat and calling upon Allah by His Beautiful Names. All of these are perfectly sized planks that will take you and your du'a to Allah and His Response. But all it takes is for one plank to be out of line for the whole bridge to be weakened, which obstructs the path of your making du'a in the hope that it will reach the Lord of the Heavens and Earth. That plank is called sin. The only way for your du'a to continue on its journey again is to remove the plank and replace it with a new one.

Dear reader, sins are misplaced or missing planks of the bridge you wish to cross into the wonders of the next life. They may also interfere with your du'a crossing over and ascending to your Rabb. How? In the throes of doing something that is displeasing to your Rabb, where is your heart? What is your heart enthralled by? Is it knowing Allah, loving Him and worshipping Him, experiencing the pleasure of all pleasures? Or is it in the pleasure of that which you are enjoying, which takes your heart away from where it belongs in du'a – conversing with your Lord?

The value for your du'a in seeking forgiveness

Sins create barriers where there were once none. But through istighfaar and tawbah, you are granted the opportunity to remove those barriers. And by Allah's Generosity, you are granted so much more. Istighfaar not only bridges the gap that has been created by sin, it is a du'a that is loved by Allah and it leads the way for your other du'a to be accepted. If this were not enough of a reward, istighfaar brings you – the repentant servant – blessings, provision and much more, as shown in the following verses of the Qur'an and a hadith. Allah ('azza wa jal) says:

> Seek forgiveness of your Lord and repent to Him (and) He will let you enjoy a good provision for a specified term and give every doer of favour His favour.
>
> Surah Hud 11:3

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever increases his prayers for forgiveness, Allah will grant him relief from every worry, a way out from every hardship, and provide for him in ways he does not expect.
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

The difference seeking forgiveness makes to your du'a

Dear reader, your sins could be piled so high that they feel like mountains. But through istighfaar, barriers are removed and the very things that your heart yearns to change or acquire are granted to you without you directly asking for them. All that is needed is a du'a focused on forgiveness with a deeply regretful heart: 'Ya Rabbi, forgive me. My Lord, I seek Your forgiveness and repent to You.' Imagine, then, what happens when you incorporate the du'a of istighfaar into your own personal du'a, subhana'Allah. As Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

> He said to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): ‘O Messenger of Allah, teach me a supplication to say in my prayers.’ The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘Say: O Allah, I have wronged myself with great wrongs and none forgives sin but You, so forgive me and have mercy upon me. Verily, You alone are The Forgiving, The Merciful.’
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

Imagine your du’a begins with a prepared heart and a tongue that praises Allah with His Most Beautiful Names, then sends salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and seeks forgiveness from Allah, knowing that not only is He The One who Forgives, but He is Al-Afuuw – The One who Pardons, completely wiping away the sin from your record as though it never existed. Dear reader, how could your du’a therefore not be answered?

How seeking forgiveness deepens your relationship with Allah

Istighfaar and du’a are incredibly powerful tools. Du’a changes qadr. The du’a of istighfaar opens doors to mercy and provision. By combining the two, can you imagine the ways your life can change, subhana’Allah? Dear reader, sin may create a barrier between you and Allah. It may create a barrier between your du’a and Allah. But it does not block you permanently from either. Your Lord is far too Merciful, Kind, Forgiving, Compassionate and Affectionate. So much so that, as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> The expiation of sin is regret. If you never sinned, Allah Almighty would surely come with people who would sin, and He would forgive them.
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

And that, right there, is Love.

It’s Your Turn – Seek Forgiveness

Allah loves to forgive. You are in need of forgiveness and will continue to be, so turn to Him with the du’a of istighfaar on its own, or incorporated into your du’a, and marvel in amazement at how your life changes.

- Every time you make du’a, weigh up what you are asking for against the sin you are enjoying. And know that even if the sin appears to outweigh what you need or want, it will never outweigh the relationship you gain with Allah.
- During idle moments, keep your tongue moist with istighfaar. As Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: ‘We counted the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), saying one hundred times in a single sitting before he stood up, “My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance. Verily, You alone are The Relenting, The Forgiving.”’ (*Sunan Tirmidhi*)
- Memorise the following du’a, which is known as the greatest du’a of forgiveness, and incorporate it into your personal supplications:

  The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘The best prayer for seeking forgiveness is to say: ‘*Allahumma anta rabbi la ilaha illa anta, khalaqtani wa ana ‘abduka wa ana ‘ala ‘ahdika wa wa’dika mastata‘tu. A‘udhu bika min sharri ma sana‘tu, abu-u laka bi ni‘matika ‘alayya wa abu-u laka bi dhanbi, faghfir li fa innahu la yaghfiru’l-dhunub illa anta*’. [O Allah, You are my Lord. None has the right to be worshipped but You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all

my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.]

And he (ﷺ) said: ‘Whoever says this during the day, having faith in it, and dies before the evening comes, will be among the people of Paradise, and whoever says it during the night, having faith in it, and dies before the morning comes, will be among the people of Paradise.’

Sahih Bukhari

- Sometimes we cannot remember all that we need to ask Allah’s Forgiveness for, which is why this comprehensive du’a, found in *Riyadh as-Saliheen*, is essential to include in your du’a practice:

  The Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate: ‘O Allah! Forgive my errors, ignorance and immoderation in my affairs. You are better aware of my faults than myself. O Allah! Forgive my faults which I committed in seriousness or in fun, deliberately or inadvertently. O Allah! Grant me pardon for those sins which I committed in the past and I may commit in future, which I committed in privacy or in public, and all those sins of which You are better aware than I. You Alone can send whomever You will to Jannah, and You Alone can send whomever You will to hellfire and You are Omnipotent.’

- End each day with the following du’a, remembering that all du’a of istighfaar open doors:

  The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘Whoever says when he retires to his bed: “There is no God but Allah alone without any partners, to Him belong the dominion and praise and He is Powerful over all things. There is no movement or might but in Allah. Glory be to Allah and all praise is due to Allah, there is no God but

Allah, and Allah is The Greatest", then Allah will forgive his sins even if they were like the foam of the sea.'

Ibn Hibban

Allah, Transform My Du'a

Al-Tawwab – The One who Turns to Forgive with Mercy – accept my turning in repentance to You. Assist me in holding myself to account before I am held to account. Fill my heart with concern for the times I have turned away from You. And with that concern, inspire me to seek Your Forgiveness, with the knowledge that it is among Your Attributes to be Merciful, Understanding and Forgiving. I wish to thank You and praise You for being a Lord who not only readily forgives but through doing so, expands my sustenance even when I only take a small step back towards You. Truly, I am not deserving. But Your Willingness to Forgive proves that I am. Ya Rabbi, O my Lord. And for this reason, I love You and will continue to return to You when I lose my way.

15

Be Grateful

‘Gratitude is to do one’s utmost [with the blessing].’

Ibn al-Qayyim, Madaarij As-Salikeen

I’m sitting here in a café, working on this book. I’m so grateful to have the chance to do so, Alhamdulillah. But the act of writing is only the latest in a long chain of blessings I have received. If I didn’t have a laptop, I wouldn’t have been able to deliver the manuscript in the time required by my publisher. If I hadn’t learned how to write, I wouldn’t have been able to turn my ideas into words. If I didn’t have the English teachers I did, I might not have been inspired to write at all. If I didn’t have agile fingers, the task would have been impossible. If I didn’t have good eyesight or a healthy mind, I wouldn’t have been able to observe and think – transferring my thoughts and experiences to the page. So when I say that I am grateful to be able to write, what I am truly grateful for is all those other blessings too. And meeting and talking with Layla were so helpful in guiding me to see this more clearly.

Layla is an Irish woman in her fifties who embraced Islam ten years ago. I met Layla at an Islamic convention and told her about the charity I founded, Solace UK, which she has fully supported ever since. Layla loves Allah and is known for her gratitude for His Guidance. Since embracing Islam, she has dedicated her life to dawah – calling people to Allah. She wants everyone to discover the true meaning of the Islamic faith. Even during her own personal struggles, she has maintained her commitment to

dawah. Her story shows that the choice to focus on Allah's Blessings leads to so much more.

Layla's Story



A number of years ago, I had gone through a divorce and my daughter Amina and I had to leave the family home in Manchester. We had nowhere to go. She was eighteen and about to do her A-level exams. A Muslim woman had very kindly offered us a place to live in Sheffield. As we packed up our car, a very old Mercedes which was on its last legs, my daughter was feeling so sad and I was doing my best to be upbeat. Trying to console her, I said: 'This is just a stepping stone. It's going to be okay.'

Once the last bag and box had been packed, I shut the car boot and began to drive. We had to cross the Pennines. I remember us hitting the first incline, and suddenly the car was struggling so much that it almost rolled backwards. Thoughts started racing through my mind: 'I really must pray for a car, because this one is about to die. How am I going to work without one? How am I going to do anything without a car in the middle of Sheffield?'

With the beautiful green hills and mountains around us, I glanced at my daughter, who was resting her head against the window. Her eyes were staring sadly into the distance as she sullenly said, 'We're homeless.'

'Astaghfirullah [O Allah, I seek Your Forgiveness]! You are going to stay in a beautiful house for free,' I told her. 'Don't even say it.' But I could see at once that my words didn't help her. Clutching the steering wheel tighter, I went on, 'Amina, instead of making this a sad moment, let's make it a moment where we are positive of Allah's bounty upon us. This is going to be good for us and I truly believe we are the ones who are going to help whoever we are staying with.' She still didn't move her head from its resting position. I continued:

‘This is a great opportunity. We’re being sent somewhere. We’re not leaving somewhere. We’re going somewhere, to something good. Let’s ask Allah. Let’s make du’a.’

She turned towards me.

‘Darling,’ I said gently. ‘What’s the one thing you want? We’re travellers. We’re in need. The du’a of the traveller is answered. Ask Allah for what you want.’

Amina took a while to answer. ‘Honestly, Mum, I just want an office where I can sit on my own and study for my A levels. It’s a really important year.’

‘Right,’ I said sitting up in my seat. ‘Allah, give this lovely girl who is a believer an office where she can have privacy to study. Ameen.’

I knew why my daughter had made this du’a. We knew we were going to be living in a shared house with teenage boys, meaning we would have to be in hijab the majority of the time. In my heart, I asked Allah: ‘Let her find a quiet corner. Allah, You can do anything.’

Amina interrupted my thoughts and said, ‘Mum, what about you?’

Without hesitation, I blurted out, ‘I need a car!’ And so I made du’a: ‘Allah, I don’t know how it’s going to happen. I don’t know where it’s going to come from. Replace this car with something better. I cannot work without a car and I don’t know how I can sustain myself or do my dawah work. You are The Sustainer. Help us with these two things.’

Then Amina said, ‘Mum, do you know why I want an office? I just want to do really well so that one day I can buy you a house.’ When I heard that, I became teary. My lovely daughter didn’t want to be rich or gain the prestige of being an A student. She wanted Allah’s Help to provide a way to succeed so she could provide for me one day. And I was focused on my dawah. We weren’t thinking of ourselves in a moment of hardship, but of what we could do for other people with the ni’mah [blessings] that Allah had and would bring for us. So I knew Allah would not let us down. I knew He would respond in the best of ways.*

It was night by the time we drove up to the house of the sister who was having us to stay. The car basically died on the driveway. We went inside the house and the kind sister walked us upstairs to a bedroom that we would be sharing. It was small, with no room for Amina to study. From down the corridor we could hear young men's voices. We would be sharing a bathroom too I now realised. Alhamdulilah in all things!

Amina quietly said to me, 'Oh, there isn't an office.'

Despite the noise in the next door bedrooms, the Muslim sister looked at us and said, 'What do you mean, no office? There's a secret office. My father was an academic. Look here.'

She took us across the hall. There was a barely visible door that led into a beautiful academic's office with shelves and shelves of books and a view of the garden outside. She turned to Amina and said to her, 'This key is for you. You're the only one who gets to use this office.'

Witnessing this for my daughter, the only words that came to my mind were: 'Allahu akbar.' [God is The Greatest.]

We walked back over to our bedroom and Amina had a spring to her step. She looked at me with a smile and said, 'Right, I can do this.'

Leaving Amina to unpack, I went to sit in the living room with our generous host and she asked me, 'How are you?'

'Oh, I'm fine,' I replied. 'Except that my car has just died. I don't know how I'm going to get around. But Allah knows best.'

My host pointed towards one of the windows that looked onto the driveway where there was a black 4x4, one of the nicest cars I have ever seen in my life. Then she asked me, 'I'm selling that car – do you want it?'

'I can't,' I replied. I could see that she was puzzled by my reaction. I didn't know where to look. Embarrassed by my current financial state, I muttered, 'I can't buy it. I'm literally at rock bottom at the moment.'

'Don't worry,' she said comfortingly. 'Can you afford a small amount and kind of lease-to-own it?' She offered a tiny amount I could afford.

I almost shouted: 'What!'

And that was it. For the next two years, I had the best car of my life. And Amina had her office to use for her studies.

However, the time we spent in Sheffield was not easy. Amina had to travel back and forth to Manchester for college. She commuted three hours every day and never complained. She used to cycle at 6am in the dark to the railway station and get to college by 8.30am, then get home at 5pm and study hard until 10pm. She was an absolute trooper, MashaAllah [God has willed it].

The wonderful sister was a single mum at the time. During our time at her house, we cooked meals together. We made a community with the two of us, until one day she said to me, 'Before you guys came, this place was like a hotel where my kids would just come in and then leave again. With you in it, my house became a home.'

When I heard those words, I realised that Amina and I had literally been sent somewhere to do good. We hadn't been driven out of our home. We were answering someone else's du'a. Since then, we have never worried. All we need to do is be grateful to Allah for our blessings and turn a hardship into ease and a possibility. Allah's Promise is true:
Fa inna ma'al usri yusra – verily with hardship comes ease.

Surah Ash-Sharh 94: 5

Develop Your Du'a

One of my favourite verses from the Qur'an is the following:

If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more.

Surah Ibrahim 14:7

I am inspired by Layla's story. Her ability to be grateful to Allah at a time of great instability, and to display even more gratitude by perceiving her

very challenging circumstances as an opportunity, are a lesson we should all take. All situations, good or bad, are only good or bad according to your perception of them. At first, Layla's daughter, Amina, only perceived homelessness, whereas Layla saw blessing: she and Amina had been provided with a place to stay for free.

In every du'a that you make, you are asking Allah for that which you currently do not possess. So it is natural to focus on what you are yearning and hoping for. But what if you shifted your lens slightly to that which you do have, while raising your hands, being vulnerable before Allah ('azza wa jal) and expecting the absolute best from Him? I will tell you what is most likely to happen. You will feel full before you even ask. And Allah will acknowledge your gratitude and give you more.

The value of being grateful for your du'a

Allah ('azza wa jal) says:

> Anyone who is grateful does so to the profit of his own soul …
>
> Surah Luqman 31:12

There is a strong message too in the words of the Prophet Dawud (alayhis-salam) who said:

> 'O Lord, show me the hidden blessings upon me.' Allah Almighty said: 'O Dawud, breathe,' so Dawud took a breath. Allah said: 'Who counts these blessings in each day and night?'
>
> *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*

Similarly, the epitome of gratitude is found within the following hadith:

> The Prophet (ﷺ) would pray until his feet were swollen. It was said to him: 'Why do you do this when Allah has forgiven your past and

> future sins?' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Shall I not be a grateful servant?'
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

Dear reader, by thanking Allah for the countless blessings in your life, you place yourself in a position to receive abundance, because your eyes have already acknowledged this and will be accustomed to seeing it and finding it. The eyes that belong to an impoverished heart can only see what is missing and lacking. They will continue to focus on what is needed, rather than what is there and possible. The eyes that belong to a grateful heart recognise what has already been given and what is yet to be given and can be given – all that is possible with the Lord of the Worlds. There's an excitement because the perception has been embedded so deeply that He already has been Generous and will give you that for which you ask, so long as it is good for you.

Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) says:

> And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful.
>
> Surah Ibrahim 14:34

The difference gratitude makes to your du'a

From a grateful heart, Layla knew that only further blessings were awaiting her and her daughter. She just did not know what they would be. Dear reader, whatever it is you need or want, place within your heart joyous gratitude – it will train your heart to smile, expecting a response from your Lord with your already grateful heart, ready to thank Him even more.

What I love about Layla's story is that gratitude produced the desire to thank Allah through worship. Here you have mother and daughter with no Muslim family of their own, with nowhere to live, acknowledging Allah's favours upon them, believing that He will extend His favours upon them

and making intention to do further good with the way He has and will respond to their need. If this isn't gratitude, I don't know what is. May Allah make us of the grateful. Ameen.

Layla also saw her change in circumstances and subsequent need as interesting. Rather than being overwhelmed with worry, she became curious. Her gratitude led her to curiosity and hope, wondering: what does Allah have for us in this situation?

Dear reader, when you make du'a, I invite you to do the same. As you ask, get hopefully curious as to what Allah has in store for you. For He only increases the grateful. And as Al-Sarri, may Allah have mercy on him, said:

> Gratitude for a blessing is itself a blessing.
>
> *Shu'ab al-Iman*

How being grateful deepens your relationship with Allah

The bounties of Allah are so numerous that Ibn al-Jawzi rightly said in his book *Sayd Al-Khater*, 'The more I observe the bounties that Allah keeps bestowing upon me, the more I find myself struggle to find the appropriate way to express my gratitude.'

This exemplifies how gratitude can deepen your relationship with your Rabb. Quite simply, the more you are grateful, the more you fall in love with your Lord. And yet, the struggle to find ways to express your gratitude and love for Him, in turn, increases His Love for you. For Allah loves those who are grateful.

It's Your Turn – Be Grateful

Gratitude is itself a form of du'a. As Ibn al-Qayyim wrote in *Madaarij As-Salikeen*:

Gratitude is to bear witness to the Giver rather than the gift.

- Train yourself to be thankful by spending five minutes each day saying ‘Alhamdulillah’, bringing to mind something you are grateful for.
- Choose something big that you are grateful for. It could be your job. Then break it down to the smallest part, while being grateful for it all. For example: the income from your job; the mode of transport Allah has provided for you to get to work; the cost of paying for travel; the bag which holds your travel pass; the hook where you can hang your bag each day to keep it safe. And so on …
- Thank Allah for a blessing and for all the other blessings that came before it, without which this blessing would not have been possible (a good example is the chain of blessings I mentioned earlier, which led me to be able to write). Thank Allah for it all.
- Practise gratitude in the morning and evening through the words of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), who said:

  Whoever says in the morning, ‘O Allah, whatever favour comes to me has come from You alone without any partner, to You are praise and thanks’, then he will have expressed his gratitude for the day. If he says similar to it in the evening, he will have expressed his gratitude for the evening.

  Sunan Abu Dawud

- Before you ask in du’a, tell Allah what you are grateful for. Thank Him for all your everyday blessings. Thank Him for the current blessings within the circumstances of your du’a request. Come to Allah as a subject who is grateful to the King, thanking Him for previous treasures, before excitedly asking Him for more.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Allah, I do so very little by way of worship and yet You fully appreciate my ibadah to You. Rabbi, guide me to become a grateful servant who remembers Your Blessings at times of both ease and calamity; who finds bundles of mercy during hardship; who looks forward to further blessings after I have thanked You and asked of You. You are Ash-Shakur, The One who is Grateful and Appreciative. I am Your servant who brings to You my needs. Before I ask You, I wish to immerse my heart in gratitude, for my greater need is to be known by You as a servant who is ever grateful.

16

Use the Du’a of Yunus (alayhis-salam)

‘And whosoever fears Allah, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide for him from sources he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him. Verily, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Indeed, Allah has set a measure for all things.’

Surah Talaq 65:2–3

Your difficulties are specifically assigned to you because Allah (‘azza wa jal) knows that which will bring you back to Him. We have been given a most beautiful du’a that the Prophet Yunus (alayhis-salam) cried out during the most debilitating point of his life. And so, too, did my dear sister in faith, Maryam, who is an Eritrean mother of two. I first met Maryam when she was at university, and I have observed her grow from young student to parent. She has always been quiet, but there is a light about her that I imagine emanates from her deep love for Allah. As someone who has always been exceptionally close to her family, especially after her mother passed away, she made it a priority to ensure that she and her siblings maintained that closeness, especially for the sake of their children.

Maryam’s Story



I was making du'a for three years straight to move from South London to North London, where I'm originally from. I was living with my husband and children, but I couldn't fit in with the community there. Plus, we had been driving 200 miles a week, as my children went to a really great school in North London and needed to continue there.

The way housing works in the UK is that if you're renting privately, you're basically on your own to sort yourself out financially and afford it. In Ramadan 2021, I remember waking up every night on the last ten nights, making du'a to Allah to move us to North London. When I finally reached out to a letting agent, they booked me in to view a property. The day I was meant to go, the UK was being battered by Storm Eunice and the back window of my car got shattered. With hardly any time left to reach the appointment, I remember looking at the tiny pieces of glass thinking, 'Khalas, the property has gone.'

A few months later, a property that was literally a road behind the one I had been hoping for when Storm Eunice hit came onto the market, and I decided to view it. I knew it would be a rejection as soon as I walked out of the place. After you've been in the game for a while, viewing property after property, you know if the estate agent will even give you the time of day.

I had reached my limit. The drive back home to South London with my three and five-year-old was tough. All these months looking. The long drives up and down. Up until this point, I hadn't cried. I'd just got on with it. But on that drive, it all boiled up and I burst into tears in front of my kids. I had never done that before. The tears of sheer exhaustion just kept flowing.

*Only one thing came to my mind, and that was the story of the Prophet Yunus [alayhis-salam] when he was in the belly of the whale. He cried out: '**La ilaha illa anta subhanaka inni kuntu minadhalimeen** – There is none worthy of worship except You, Glory to You. Indeed, I have been of the transgressors.' He was stuck*

and he knew at that point, the only way out was with Allah's Help. I felt like that. I was doing my utmost best to try to get my kids up to North London, near my family, but every door was closing.

As I stared into the road through blurry tear-filled eyes, I said: 'Allah, I have no one but You. Open this door for me. Just like You saved Yunus [alayhis-salam] and you brought him out of his stuck situation, O Allah, grant me a way out too. La ilaha illa anta subhanaka inni kuntu minadhalimeen – There is none worthy of worship except You, Glory to You. Indeed I have been of the transgressors.' These words were not my words; I don't normally speak like this or make du'a like this – linking my need to a prophet. So I knew this was from Allah. He guided me to use these words to make du'a to Him.

I kept repeating this du'a of Yunus [alayhis-salam] and the more I repeated it, the calmer I felt. Subhana'Allah, as soon as I had finished my du'a, my heart felt at peace. The tears stopped and I was like: 'Maryam, don't worry. Allah has got you.' I felt supported. I felt reassured that things will turn out just fine. I felt like Allah was with me in His Love, Mercy and Care. That level of calm felt like something out of this world – that's the only way I can describe it.

A week later, I saw the same property advertised to rent that I had originally wanted to view when Storm Eunice hit. And I thought: 'Oh subhana'Allah.'

I called the estate agent and he told me, 'Yeah, it's available, but I've gotta warn you – the landlady is extremely picky. She hasn't let her property for two years. Just to let you know what type of landlord you're gonna be dealing with.'

In my heart, I said to myself: Allah decides – not the landlord.

I went to view the property. It was everything that we were looking for and more. For a moment, I thought: 'What's the point? I'm not going to get it.' It had been three years driving up and down viewing properties. I was so used to being rejected. But suddenly a feeling came over me and I thought: 'No, if Allah decides this is going to be your house, then it's going to be your house.' I knew this feeling was from Allah.

It was Ramadan. I made du'a to Allah and said: 'O Allah, You decide.'

Then, subhana'Allah, a few days after viewing the property, the same estate agent called me.

'You'll never believe it, Maryam! She's actually interested in having you as her tenant.' He sounded gobsmacked.

Relief came over me. I remember thinking: 'It's amazing – when something is written for you, it's for you.'

After three years of making du'a, my dream came true. When we moved into the property, the landlady – who was supposed to be so strict and picky – left us a card and a box of chocolates. On the card was a handwritten note that said: 'I'm very happy to let my property to you. This is your home.'

To get that relief in Ramadan was a most beautiful gift from Allah. Every time I look out of the window, I say: 'This is from You.' Allah literally opened the door for me.

Develop Your Du'a

> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'The supplication of Yunus, Dhul Nun, when he called upon Allah inside the belly of the whale was this: 'There is no God but You, glory be to You for I have certainly been among the wrongdoers' (Surah 21:87). Verily, a Muslim never supplicates for anything with it but that Allah will answer him.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

The Prophet Yunus (alayhis-salam) made this du'a after he recognised the mistake he had made in leaving his people without Allah's consent. Disheartened by the people's refusal to heed his warnings about idolatry and sin, he left the city of Nineveh and boarded an overloaded ship that got caught in a storm. When the ship began to sink, Yunus (alayhis-salam) sacrificed himself by throwing himself into the sea, where he was

swallowed by a whale. Inside the belly of the whale, he repented to Allah. Allah loves us to acknowledge our mistakes and turn to Him for forgiveness; mentioning the du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam) in our own du'a makes it mustajaab – surely answered.

The value of and difference the du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam) makes to your du'a

The true value and weight of Yunus's du'a lay in his turning to Allah for forgiveness. Dear reader, never ever underestimate the true value of istighfaar and tawbah in your own du'a. It is so loved by Allah. You, too, may find yourself in desperate circumstances, as did Yunus (alayhis-salam). You are alone, without support from anyone. Your future appears to be bleak. When you feel scared, alone and uncertain of the unknown, like Yunus (alayhis-salam), turn to Allah and call out to Him using Yunus's du'a, internalising its meaning in the context of your own need. The very wording of Yunus's du'a teaches us so much:

La ilaha illa anta – (There is none worthy of worship except You)

Here, in your need for a way out, you are proclaiming your belief that He is The Creator, He is the One. He reigns Supreme and there is nothing greater than Him. Where waves of anxiety envelop you, anchoring yourself to the concrete belief that Allah exists and has full control over you and your life creates the reassuring conviction that you are not alone. A calm sense of security replaces the chaos.

Subhanaka – (Glory be to You)

Amid your confusion, you praise Allah, glorifying Him and showing Him you are His servant who acknowledges His Might. Tell Allah what He means to You. Thank Him. Praise Him. Show Him that, 'Ya Rabbi, I'm

really struggling right now, but I love You and I'm going to tell you why I love You.'

Inni kuntu minadhalimeen – (Surely, I am from among the wrongdoers)

Dear reader, Allah loves when you turn back to Him, so much so that when you are knee-deep in turmoil and choose to mention your weakness, your mistakes, your sin and your need of Allah's Forgiveness, this is when Allah will respond to your personal need. Can you not see how truly beautiful this state is to Allah? Despite every cell in your body craving relief, by mentioning the du'a of Yunus, you are choosing to prioritise your relationship with your Lord – being forgiven by Him comes first, with your own need in second place. Do you not think such a choice will be honoured by the Reliever of Distresses? Do you think you will find your Rabb being anything other than so very Compassionate and Kind with You? Dear reader, He will rush to you to relieve you of your problems, worries and distress.

How the du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam) deepens your relationship with Allah

Know this: there is no one who can help except your Rabb. There will be people who will be a means to help you, but they are only resources that are brought your way by your Master who is your Protector, The Best Disposer of your affairs. When I look back at my own life and the lives of others, I see a pattern and I see that Allah knows best. There is a point in your life, in everyone's life, where Allah will make you recognise that He is the only One who can truly assist you during the depths of dark times. Your Lord will teach you that turning to Him first is the only way you should live your life. He brings you to your knees in situations He knows will be the best lesson for you. And though it feels hard, He is Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem and will be there with you, watching how you respond – guiding you to respond by acknowledging Him and humbling yourself before Him in your

state of abject despair – then asking of Him. The du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam) is powerful in its meaning and in how it transforms your du'a, but most importantly in how it deepens and strengthens your relationship with Allah. Dear reader, your Lord wants you to acknowledge that you are an imperfect servant in need. And He wants you to know that through recognising your imperfect state, He, in contrast, is One who is Perfect and can and will rescue you. All He wants is a small step towards Him from you.

It's Your Turn – Use the Du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam)

When it seems that you're doomed, ask like Yunus (alayhis-salam).

- Familiarise yourself with the story of Yunus (alayhis-salam) and as you read or listen to his story, pause and relate it to your own life. Share the story with someone you know to really solidify its lessons within your own life.
- Memorise the du'a of Yunus (alahyis-salam) in Arabic and your own first language.
- Think of something you need and after praising Allah with His Beautiful Names and Attributes, sending salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ), seeking forgiveness from your Lord and thanking Him for His blessings, make the du'a of Yunus and ask Allah for what you desperately need.
- In times of distress, call upon Allah and repeat this du'a.

Allah, Transform My Du'a

My Lord, sometimes life feels so heavy and dark, and so I call upon You by Your Name Al-Nur – The Light. In the darkness of my tests when I feel lost, not knowing which way to turn, grant me Your Light. Change my mind

and heart so that I am never confused about which way to turn, but, rather, that I know I can and must turn to You first. You are a Lord who Rescues Your servants when they are drowning. I ask You to always catch me. *La ilaha illa anta subhanaka inni kuntu minadhalimeen*. There is no God but You. Glory be to You, for I have certainly been among the wrongdoers. Help me to remember that my relationship with You is more important than my difficult circumstances. Remind me to turn to You for forgiveness when I am in need. Place the du'a of Yunus (alayhis-salam) on my lips at the lowest points in my life. I know You will always save me when I cry out to You sincerely.

17

Make Du’a Like a Child Pleading

‘The Prophet (ﷺ) used to like making du’a three times and to seek repentance three times.’

Sunan Ahmad

‘One of the most beneficial of cures is persistent du’a.’

Ibn al-Qayyim, Al-Jawabul Kāfi

In the chapters you have read so far in this part of the book, you have been provided with guidance on elements to use in your du’a: what to begin with and what should follow next, where possible. But sometimes du’a is not so structured. Sometimes it’s just raw childlike pleading. There is no script. You can’t even remember what is best to say. The dryness is replaced with streaming tears and a broken voice. And that’s okay.

Alison has been Muslim for nearly three decades. She is a children’s author and has a deep interest in self-development, so we quickly bonded over these mutual passions when we met years ago. After I moved abroad to live in Algeria, we lost touch, until the decree of Allah unfolded when Alison applied to join the charity I founded in the UK, where she became my colleague. Little did we both know that this would become a stepping stone to the answer to a du’a she had been making for over twenty-five years!

Alison's Story



I was blessed to go on Umrah a year after I became Muslim. And when I got back, I had this deep yearning to perform the greater pilgrimage – Hajj.

I had been in a really terrible housing situation. When your sitting room, living room, bedroom and office is the same room, you can imagine how challenging it is. There was mould everywhere and the bathroom was a mess. For anyone in such a situation, all you would want is a new home in this life. But I wanted to invest in my hereafter. I decided that I would continue living in this state and save for Hajj. I had some money to put down for a deposit to rent a new place, but I kept asking myself: 'Do I spend money on that, or on Hajj? No, I don't want a house. I want Allah's House.' And so I decided to carry on saving.

All I kept thinking about was the fact that this life leads to the next life, so my Hajj was the most important thing. If you were to put Hajj in my one hand and a new house in the other, I would have always chosen to go to Hajj. This was despite my desperation of wanting and needing to move to a new home. My health wasn't so good, and age wasn't on my side. But Hajj, for me, was so much greater, so much sweeter.

After twenty-seven years of asking Allah, last year during Ramadan my du'a completely shifted in the way that I asked. I made so much du'a in the last ten blessed nights. I knew there was a possibility my du'a could fall on Laylatul Qadr [the Night of Decree]. So I had to ensure I made that du'a as much as possible.

I pleaded and cried like never before. It was such an amazing experience. I actually enjoyed the du'a I was making. It wasn't just something I was doing. It was something I was feeling deeply. During my du'a, I was getting emotional and really hopeful. I felt the sweetness of emaan; the khushoo [focus in prayer]; the certainty and trust in my Lord that He would answer me.

I asked Allah: 'Invite me to your House. I really want to go. I want to be close to You. I love You. I don't want to be closer to anyone other than You. Out of all houses, I want to be invited to Yours. That's where I want to be.'

I felt like a child who desperately pleads to a parent when they fear they may be deprived of their love, or are turned away empty-handed because they may have disappointed them in some way. I made sincere du'a, asking Allah to forgive me and to send peace and blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ). Calling upon Him with His Most Beautiful Names, I begged Him to invite me to His House, and to grant me the pleasure of being His honoured guest. I didn't feel worthy, but I had a real hope and certainty that He would answer my du'a. Not because I was special, but because it was only by His Mercy and Generosity that He could make it happen.

The thing is – I'm not like that normally. I don't beg people. If you don't like me, fine. If you're not going to help me, fine. But oh my, I begged Allah so much in that du'a.

I had a strong feeling of conviction when I lifted my hands in du'a. As my tears flowed freely, waves of intense love for my Creator swept throughout my entire body. It was a sweetness of faith and trust that I had never felt before and I didn't want it to end. I kept making du'a, savouring and basking in the warmth of my own emotions. If you could bottle it up and sell those wonderful feelings – oh boy!

Then, a few weeks before Hajj season, I was sent a message by you, Aliyah. You asked me if I was fully vaccinated and able to go to Hajj, as there was an opportunity that had emerged for a number of revert women to be funded to go to Hajj by an anonymous donor. You had no idea of the du'a I had been making only weeks before.

I remember telling you I didn't have the means to go. When you told me that it would be fully paid for and I just needed to confirm vaccinations and availability, I was screaming in my head and bouncing off the walls. I kept saying, 'Alhamdulillah! Subhana'Allah!' repeatedly. I immediately remembered the du'a I had made in Ramadan and thought: Yes! I knew He would do it. The

opportunity to go blew my mind, but for it to be paid outright showed that He went above and beyond what I had asked for.

Develop Your Du’a

I remember listening to a powerful lecture about du’a. In the lecture, Sheikh Tawfique Chowdhury described the way each of his children asked him for something. The eldest did so politely. The second child pampered and praised him, and then asked. The third child impatiently asked for what she wanted and said: ‘Please, please, please.’ The fourth child says, ‘Baba’, and just smiled. But the fifth child, then three years old, cried, and when she was told ‘no’ increased the volume of her crying. And then upon hearing yet another ‘no’, she stepped it up and started screaming.

He went on to ask: ‘And who do you think was most successful in their asking? It’s the last one – and she gets what she wants all the time!’

He was speaking with humour about his youngest daughter’s persistence. But he then made a serious point. Her persistence arises from her certainty that her parents are far more powerful than she is. She has no doubt that they can grant her wishes. ‘So why can’t we ask Allah and make du’a like a three-year-old child?’ he said.

The value of childlike pleading in your du’a

Dear reader, your Lord loves when you make du’a. So much so that He is shy to leave your hands empty, as mentioned in an earlier chapter. So, knowing your Lord is Generous and loves when you make du’a, what is stopping you from crying uncontrollably to Him, not fearing to be vulnerable, persisting like a three-year-old child? Your Lord is not a Lord who sees crying and supplication as a weakness. He loves to hear from you and receives your cries as a sign of your trust in Him.

The ability to cry for His Sake and to Him emanates from a deep consciousness of Allah. Don’t you know, dear reader, that your tears are

precious to your Lord? Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) says:

> And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognise; they say: 'Our Lord! We believe, so write us down with the witnesses of the truth.'
>
> Surah Maidah 5:83

> And they say: Glory be to our Lord! Most surely the promise of our Lord was to be fulfilled. And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility.
>
> Surah Isra 17:108–109

The difference childlike supplication makes to your du'a

Plead to Allah because, like a child to a parent, you know He has the power to grant you what you ask, and is Loving, Generous, Giving and Merciful. Plead because you believe in the hadith narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported:

> Some prisoners of war were brought to the Prophet (ﷺ) and a nursing woman was among them. Whenever she found a child among the prisoners, she would take it to her chest and nurse it. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to us: 'Do you think this woman would throw her child into the fire?' We said: 'No, not if she was able to stop it.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Allah is more Merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child.'
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

And once you experience the rush of emotion that comes from supplication to Allah, crying like a child – the sheer sweetness of it – you will realise

du’a can never be a one-time event. Just like a child, who repeats and repeats their request and doesn’t stop, never giving up, du’a must always be followed up with more du’a. And Allah (‘azza wa jal) loves that.

How childlike supplication deepens your relationship with Allah

Khazim ibn Husayn reported:

> Malik ibn Dinar, may Allah have mercy on him, said: ‘To weep over a mistake will dispel sins just as the wind dispels dry leaves.’
>
> Ibn Abi al-Dunya, *Al-Riqqah Wal-Bukaa*

Dear reader, I love this quote. Tears over a mistake wipe away sins just as the wind moves the dry leaves of the earth. If this is the way Allah (‘azza wa jaal) responds to your tears over mistakes that you have made, what then of your tears that fall out of needing Him, yearning for His Help, begging Him for His Response for either relief and ease from distress or something that you want so ardently? Subhana’Allah. Remember the hadith that Allah is more Merciful than a mother is to her child. And with that in mind, know this: with every tear that is shed for the sake of your Lord, He will draw you nearer to Him, even more than a loving mother who cannot withstand seeing you cry. Tears, dear reader, therefore place you within His Divine Embrace.

It’s Your Turn – Plead with the Trust of a Child

Take your du’a to Allah through the vulnerability of your tears.

- If you are unable to cry in du’a, then read this saying of one of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ):

> Ibn Abi Mulaykah reported: ‘I was sitting with Abdullah ibn Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, by the stone of the Kabah, and he mentioned a prophetic tradition, then he said: ‘Weep! If you do not find yourself weeping, then feign weeping. By the one in whose hand is my soul, if you truly knew, one of you would cry out until his voice is hoarse and pray until his back is broken.’
>
> *Kitab al-Zuhd wal-Raqa’iq*

- On that advice, seek to cry in du’a until your tears fall freely.
- When you make du’a, imagine Allah is in front of you. How would you ask of Him then? Ask in this way.
- If you are uncomfortable in making du’a with persistence and a childlike supplication, then revisit the Names of Allah to understand who your Lord is. You will then discover why this is one of the most beautiful states a servant can and should be in.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Al-Wadood – The Most Loving, You are more Caring and more Merciful than a mother is to her child. I am forever in need of your Love and Care. My Most Merciful Lord, I know my tears are safe with You. I know my vulnerability is accepted by You. O Allah, when I come to You desperate and needy, I know You will never see me other than as a servant whom You will Willingly Help and Comfort. When my eyes cannot shed tears, encourage me to cry for Your Sake. Remind me that my persistence in need will only be met by the extent of Your Kindness and Generosity.

18

Dream Big in Your Du’a

‘Ibn Abbas reported: ‘The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Verily, Allah Almighty is Magnanimous and He loves magnanimity. He loves the highest morals and He detests pettiness.”’

Hilyat al-Awliyā’

I’m sure, at one point or another in your life, you’ve been taught that asking for more is greedy, and that greed is a character flaw and a disease of the heart. While from an Islamic perspective this is true, asking for more with Allah – dreaming big – is beautiful. It can completely transform your du’a and life, as the story of Jameela shows. Jameela grew up in the countryside but now resides in London. An English teacher by profession with a love for humanitarian work, she is one of my closest friends. I love her dearly and it was emotional for both of us when she shared her story which I now share with you. It teaches the importance of dreaming big in your du’a, and I should mention that it deals with the sensitive topic of fertility.

Jameela’s Story



When I was sixteen, I trained as a nursery nurse, which led to my love of working with children. One of my favourite jobs was in an orphanage in the Philippines. It was sad to witness how damaged the children were, but deeply fulfilling to work with them. At that time, I didn't want to have children of my own: I wanted to help ones like these, who had nobody else to look after them. But despite many attempts to volunteer again, no further opportunities opened up to work with children abroad. Doors kept closing. Allah wanted me in London to teach English to adults. One of my students became my husband and he introduced me to Islam, which I later embraced. I didn't take my shahaadah until I was thirty-three.

We decided to start a family. However, we were in our thirties already, so we knew we should do so straight away. But for a year, nothing was happening. I started to pursue the route of: 'Is there anything wrong?' We had checks done and everything was fine. I had to place my trust in Allah. I felt as though I didn't have much time left, so I kept asking Him: 'Please give me one child. Just one.'

Then, one day, we went to Regent's Park Mosque in central London and my husband asked me to wait outside for him in the courtyard. It's a lovely place. I was watching the cars coming in and out of the car park while I was waiting. An eight-seater drove past. There was a husband and wife in the front and all the windows were open – it was full of noisy, happy children. As I looked at them, I realised what I truly wanted. Right there and then, I made du'a and said, 'O Allah, I would so love a big family like that! Just happy together.'

Life continued. I still wasn't pregnant. We arranged to go to Hajj, then just before we were due to leave, I started to feel sick. I felt that something was different. I booked an appointment with the doctor and she told me I was pregnant. I couldn't believe it! But instantly, worry came over me as I wondered if the vaccinations we had had before travelling would harm the baby.

On Hajj I felt sick, and sometimes I'd have to hide behind the coach and throw up. It was difficult, but only to be expected early in a pregnancy. But when we got back home, I started bleeding. I was very scared, and made du'a that I wouldn't lose the baby. But the

bleeding got heavier, and my husband took me to hospital. The doctors told me that I was having a miscarriage. I can't tell you how upset I was. I had made so much du'a. I had made more du'a about this baby than anything else. I had still only asked for that one child. But if this was Allah's decision, what could I do? I had to accept it.

The doctors advised me to get some sleep that night and said they would check on me in the morning. They prepared me for the worst, telling me that if the miscarriage wasn't complete, they might have to intervene to remove the rest of the pregnancy. The following day, they did their routine checks. The baby's heartbeat was still there. They couldn't explain it. Then the bleeding stopped. I was still pregnant. Seven months later, I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl.

When I saw her, I made du'a: 'Allah, give me just one more.'

After I had my second baby, I asked Allah for just one more – but I had no idea my husband had been making du'a for twins. I was very, very sick in my third pregnancy, and soon found out why. During the ultrasound, they saw two embryos! Again, I made du'a and asked Allah for just one more. I did that until I got to the seventh baby – after that, I had a little rest. And then I made du'a for one more, and gave birth to my last baby. By then, I was forty-three. I had my first baby at the age of thirty-five and my last baby at forty-three. This is only from Allah.

When we got our big ten-seater people carrier to transport our family, I remembered that car full of laughing, chattering children that I'd seen when I was sitting in the courtyard of Regent's Park Mosque. That was the moment I had suddenly realised Allah had answered my du'a. I just thought: 'Subhana'Allah, look at what Allah does!'

I love sharing my story because I want to give women hope when they're older. My repeated du'a was answered. It was a complete and utter miracle. For all those women who marry later on in life, there's hope in du'a.

Develop Your Du'a

Dear reader, the idea of asking for more with Allah – being greedy – may make you feel uncomfortable. But allow me to share with you two ahadith from the Prophet (ﷺ):

> There is no Muslim who calls upon Allah, without sin or cutting family ties, but that Allah will give him one of three answers: He will quickly fulfil his supplication, He will store it for him in the Hereafter, or He will divert an evil from him similar to it.' They said: 'In that case, we will ask for more.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Allah has even more.'
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) also said:

> Let one of you ask his Lord for his needs, all of them, even for a shoestring when his breaks.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

The companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) understood completely how every du'a they take to Allah is answered in one of the aforementioned ways. So be as certain as they were in your own du'a.

The value of asking for more in your du'a

I need you to internalise this deeply: that every single time you raise your hands, they are never returned to you empty. Every time you feel an ache in your chest, it is embraced by The Most Loving, The Compassionate, The Most Merciful. Not a du'a that you ask is ever rejected – and so dear reader, go all out! Go to town with Allah! Be greedy in your du'a. Make as much du'a as you can about anything and everything. Your Lord is Al-Kareem. When He gives, He exceeds all expectations and grants you that which your mind and heart could never conceive. His Generosity to you is not restricted

to a time, place or a good deed that you perform. It is constant, flowing and overflowing. Allah (‘azza wa jal) says:

> Who is it that will lend to Allah a good loan which Allah will multiply many times over for them, and they will have an honourable reward?
>
> Surah Al-Hadid 57:11

> Indeed, those men and women who give in charity and lend to Allah a good loan will have it multiplied for them, and they will have an honourable reward.
>
> Surah Al-Hadid 57:18

The difference wanting more makes to your du’a

Dear reader, once you internalise the fact that every du’a is answered by The One who is Generous without measure, this will change your relationship with du’a. If you know everything you ask for is answered, what would you ask for? What would you *really* ask for?

A correct understanding of the manifestation of du’a and the knowledge of how Generous Allah is allows you to dream – and dream big. It frees your du’a from the shackles you have placed on it due to your limited human mindset of what is possible. It frees you to make du’a for the big and the small, and everything in between. It provides you with the emotional security, knowing that your cries for help, relief and ease will be responded to in one form or another. You are not alone. You are not left to wonder if your du’a will be answered. It’s only a case of how. This guarantee allows you to be abundant in what you ask for, never placing limits on your du’a, because you know there are no limits in what Allah can do for you. You get to be greedy with the One who loves this type of greed with Him. Subhana’Allah.

How asking for more deepens your relationship with Allah

Here I am, writing my second book. I remember when I published my first book, many friends told me, ‘Aliyah, you’ve done it. You achieved your dream. Now you can rest and move on.’ But I wanted more. I wanted to write again. And so, I became greedy in my du’a and asked Allah to grant me the permission to write another book that would reach even more hearts and earn me even more reward. And He responded as, Alhamdulillah, you are reading the answer to that du’a. And I have full expectation of my Rabb that He will facilitate the rest of my request. Abu Bakr ibn ‘Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> ‘A slave never says Alhamdulillah one time except that he must receive a blessing for his saying Alhamdulillah.’ So what is the proper response to that blessing? Its response is to say Alhamdulillah, and so there will come another blessing, and so the blessings of Allah never cease.
>
> Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, *Jaami’ al-‘Uloom w’al-Hikam*

Greed in du’a creates a closeness to Allah, because du’a is worship. And dreaming big intensifies that worship, drawing you even closer to your Lord.

It’s Your Turn – Dream Big and Be Greedy in Your Du’a

Always believe Allah can and will give you more.

- Spend some time learning who Al-Kareem, Al-Jawad is.
- Make a list of all the ways Allah has been generous to you in the last few days.

- Think of a du’a that you are making or would like to make. Be greedy with Allah. Make that du’a bigger, more exciting. Add to it. Ask Allah for more than you originally wanted.
- Make a ‘Dream Du’a’ list. Knowing that whatever you ask Allah for is surely responded to in three ways – what are your dream du’a?
- Make it a practice to add the following powerful statement after asking for your need: ‘Al-Kareem, The Most Generous, I know You can give me more. Give me more, ya Rabbi.’

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Al-Jawad – The Magnanimous, I am so excited! You answer every single one of my du’a. Every single one! Ya Rabbi, I praise You for how Generous and Kind You are to Your servants. O Allah, You do not tire. You do not sleep. My pleas and requests are never too much for You. You hear them all and, O Allah, how my heart swells in love for You. You respond to them all! You are a Lord who feels shy to respond to my hands with emptiness. I am Your slave who is shy to let a day pass without abundant du’a in it – believing in Your Magnanimous Response. Increase my asking of You. Increase my asking of You, my Beloved.

19

When You Don’t Have the Words

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

‘Allah says: “To one too occupied in My Remembrance to supplicate Me, I give what is better than what I give to those who ask.”’

Sunan Tirmidhi

I’m sure there have been times in your life when you knew exactly what to say in your du’a. And then there are other times when your difficulties have been too heavy to formulate in words. Or perhaps you just feel tongue-tied and don’t know how to approach the Lord of the Worlds with your request. Much of this part of the book has taken you through a journey of what to say and how to say it. And this chapter is a must to include, because sometimes you just won’t have the words. How does Allah respond to that? I shall let Aisha’s story tell you.

I haven’t met Aisha in person, but we have enjoyed an online friendship for quite some time. She is a busy mum of five who loves being organised. She enjoys sharing her time-management and organisational tools with others. Planning ahead is something she is passionate about – but she even couldn’t have expected the events that took place in the story I am about to share. It was a life-changing response to a du’a that was not articulated in words. She couldn’t have planned for the way Allah responded to the du’a of her heart.

Aisha's Story



When I was expecting my second child, my husband had started up his own business, which was tied to a programme funded by the government. Then, all of a sudden, they pulled the funding and the programme stopped about six weeks before I was due to give birth. Suddenly, we found ourselves in a position where we had zero income as I wasn't working. To say we were stressed is an understatement. I began to increase in my dhikr, saying: ***'HasbunAllah wa ni'mal-Wakeel'*** *[Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] The best Disposer of affairs], and,* ***'Ya hayyu ya qayyum birahmatika astagheeth'*** *[O Living, O Self-Sustaining Sustainer! In Your Mercy do I seek relief].*

Dhikr was my source of comfort. I didn't make du'a as I just didn't have the words. I felt desperate. We had no plan. We couldn't see how anything would work. As my husband tried to focus on what to do with his business without the funding, I was wondering how I was going to apply for work with a baby.

Then, just before my baby was born, we received a large sum of money back from our housing association, which had overcharged us for service charges. Subhana'Allah, it arrived at the perfect time.

We lived in a building that had a community centre on the first floor and our home was just above it. When our daughter was four weeks old, the community centre manager knocked on our door. He was checking if all the tenants were happy and or had any concerns. But then he said that they would soon be hiring someone to manage things in the building, so that the tenants always had someone to approach.

'Would you be interested in the position?' he asked me.

I had never met this man before. I was carrying a very small baby. My husband and I were pretty shocked – like: 'What's just happened?'

Subhana'Allah, the work I had been doing was similar to the role on offer. It would be a perfect fit.

'Er, yes,' I blurted out.

As soon as the listing went up, I applied – and I got the job very soon after. Subhana'Allah, it worked out perfectly. Home and work were only separated by one flight of stairs. The way that this was answered was amazing. My work had to be something accessible that I could do around the children and breastfeeding while the baby was so small. Having that refund come through when we weren't expecting it, just before she was born, and then landing the job – I am always in awe of that experience. When they say something comes to you, subhana'Allah – it literally came to my door.

Now every time someone expresses a concern around rizq, especially around having children, I tell them: 'Never ever ever worry about rizq when it comes to children. Just don't. Because the way Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala] works – it is just incredible, subhana'Allah.'

When my husband's business collapsed, I knew Allah had me, but I still had worries at the back of my mind. This experience taught me that Allah sends reassurances in the most beautiful ways.

Allah knows exactly what's going to happen. He knows exactly how it will pan out and how things will be fixed. And even if you don't think it's an ideal fix, it is exactly what you need and you will get it at exactly the time you need it. Not a second before. Not a second after. The chain of events is always perfect. It's like coding. You need the step before to proceed with the next. Sometimes du'a is a gift that keeps on giving.

It was an incredible reminder of how Allah is Al-Baseer – All-Seeing. I didn't actually make a specific du'a. I didn't explicitly ask. Allah just knew the circumstances. He knew how hard we were trying to make ends meet and if we had any doubts whatsoever in our minds about whether we could make it work, they vanished almost instantly.

I am completely in awe of The Creator who is Permitting, Facilitating and Orchestrating everything in the Heavens and on the Earth – who set everything in motion for that precise moment. I am

in awe of my Lord, and I also have no business being worried or stressed because he is Al-Mujeeb [The One who Responds], Al-Wahaab [The One who Gifts], Ar-Raouf [The Most Kind], Ar-Razaaq [The One who Provides] and even more attributes than I can even recall. Islam has been and will always be the greatest gift in this life.

Develop Your Du'a

Allah ('azza wa jal) says: 'Remember Me, I will remember you.'

Surah Baqarah 2:152

The deen is easy. The way to navigate through this life is easy. Allah ('azza wa jal) has given you tools. His Messenger (ﷺ) has given you tools. We overcomplicate things, imagining that solutions, guidance and answers to du'a are far more complex than they really are.

Take a step to remember your Lord in heart and by tongue, and you will receive Allah's Special Rahma. He will single you out and remember you when you can't find the words. It is as simple as that.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> The one who remembers his Lord is, to the one who does not, as the living is to the dead.
>
> *Sahih Bukhari*

I love this hadith because, through it, you understand that the key to actual living is through the remembrance of Allah. It is oxygen for one's soul.

The value of remembrance of Allah for Your Du'a

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Allah says: ‘To one too occupied in My Remembrance to supplicate Me, I give what is better than what I give to those who ask.’
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Dhikr, the remembrances of Allah, is du’a in disguise. When you are deeply engrossed in thoughts about your Lord – how He hears you, sees you, forgives you, envelops you in His Mercy, relieves you, removes your sadness, makes you whole after you have been broken – your du’a is answered, even when you cannot find the words. Dear reader, can you not see that the one so busy with the remembrance of Allah is rewarded by Him for having been so beautifully distracted for His Sake? When you are in need and remember your Rabb, your remembrances not only carry your wordless, unspoken du’a to the Lord of the Heavens and Earth, but they provide solace and relief to your heart.

The difference remembrance of Allah makes to your du’a

There can be times in life when our circumstances are so confusing, painful and seemingly impossible to solve. Shock waves can penetrate your core, momentarily causing paralysis to your heart, forcing you to focus on breathing your next breath. In such survival mode, words are difficult to conjure up. But the one who turns to Allah in so much remembrance during times of calm and ease will have a heart that is ready to turn back to Him when a storm unexpectedly hits. And at such times of survival, Allah rescues you. You are His Beloved servant, who always remembered Him when things were going well, so it is incumbent upon Him to take care of your needs and affairs now when you need Him most. And as He not only hears the voices of His servants, He also hears the cries of the heart that are not expressed in words, giving you what you need without your lips ever having to part.

Dear reader, I know you wish to feel close to your Rabb. Know this: nearness to Allah depends on your closeness to His Remembrance. So remember Him, and He will remember you.

How remembrance of Allah deepens your relationship with Allah

How is it, at the time of death, that some believers are able to declare the shahaadah, saying: ‘La ilaha illAllah – There is nothing worthy of worship except Allah’?

I have always wondered at those that have been blessed with a husn al-khatimah (a blessed ending) as their souls depart their bodies and move onto the next life. There can only be one reason: they lived for Allah and so they are chosen and honoured to die with His Blessed Name as one of the final words to escape their lips. It is a gift from the Lord of the Worlds.

And, dear reader, while we all crave for this honour at the time of death, you can experience such an honour while you are still living. How? When your heart and tongue live for Allah, you will be honoured when you experience the very death of your peace and security at the onset of a storm. Then Allah singles you out, for you had a voice that was recognisable to the angels in the remembrance of The Creator and Master. And so He blesses you by responding to the very yearnings of your heart.

The companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) Muʿādh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> In my last conversation with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), I asked him: ‘Which deed is the best and most beloved to Allah?’ He (ﷺ) replied: ‘That you die while your tongue is moist with the remembrance of Allah.’
>
> Ibn Hibban

This is our goal.

It’s Your Turn – Remember Allah

Remember Him and He will remember you when you need it most:

- Develop a dhikr habit.
- Make a list of different remembrances of Allah and start to make dhikr with those that your heart inclines towards.
- Fill those idle moments with the dhikr of Allah.
- Pause after salah and remember Allah with the dhikr advised by our Prophet (ﷺ).
- Aim to have your heart remember something that is connected to the meaning of the dhikr you are pronouncing. This is so that your heart is making dhikr in synch with your spoken words.
- Attend gatherings where Allah is mentioned.

  The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

  ‘When you pass the meadows of Heaven, roam therein!’ And they asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what are the meadows of Heaven?’ He answered, ‘The circles of remembrance.’

  Sunan Tirmidhi

Allah, Transform My Du’a

You are Al-Raqib – The Lord who is so Attentively Observant. You observe my actions and You observe the movements of my heart. Rabbi, I want to live before I die. And I know that living is only possible when I live for You, in my actions as well as the speech of my tongue and my heart. My Lord, as your servant Ibn al-Qayyim said in *Madaarij as-Salikeen*:

> In the heart of every human being, there is a sense of scattering which can only be gathered by turning to You. And in the heart, there is a sense of loneliness which can only be overcome by feeling the intimate nearness to You in solitude. And in the heart there is sadness which can only be removed by the joy of knowing You and being true in worshipping You. And in the heart there is anxiety which can only be put at ease by gathering one's self for You and escaping from You to You.

My Lord, it is this level of intimacy that I seek with You. Bless me with the ability to remember You in times of ease, so that I am drawn close to You. So very close to You that You remember me when I do not, and You respond to my needs when I can't find the words.

20

Someone Else’s Du’a

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

‘No Muslim servant supplicates for his brother behind his back but that the angel says: “And for you the same.”’

Sahih Muslim

I am sure one of your deepest wishes is to be one of those who are beloved to Allah (‘azza wa jal). You worship, you sacrifice, you strive hard and you hope, because until the next life you will never know who really is beloved to Him. There may be some signs of who are His awliya (the allies of Allah) in the dunya, such as those who prioritise Him above all else. But really, you will never be sure.

And yet, knowing the status the awliya have with Allah, you may hope to either be one of them or to know of them. Why? Because to be in their company is to be in His (‘azza wa jal). And to have them make du’a for you is like having your needs taken to Him by His close friends.

When I interviewed Dawoud, a teacher by profession, a husband and father of two who has dedicated himself to youth work for the last fifteen years, I didn’t expect his story to turn out in the way that it did. His du’a story shows that when the world seems to be against you, turning to Allah and asking Him to be with you in your corner as you roll up your sleeves to fight your battles will always make you a winner. And also, perhaps, it involves someone else helping you with your fight too.

Dawoud's Story



In 2022, I was about to face a court case. In 2017, I'd bought a property and rented it out under the management of an estate agent. I then faced my worst nightmare as a landlord. The agent didn't manage the property well, or do inspections, and neighbours started to complain about the tenants, who made noise and left piles of rubbish outside. The property became an absolute mess: there were water leaks and damaged walls and ceilings. Eventually, the tenants stopped paying their rent, which caused me financial difficulties. I tried not to share this with anyone, even my wife, as the worry put a strain on our relationship.

In 2022, I decided to get my house back through legal means. That's when I knew I was in a real mess. None of the paperwork that the agent should have had signed and filed between them and the tenants, on my behalf, had been completed. My solicitor told me that 99 per cent of the time the judge rules in favour of the tenants, unless something is exceptionally wrong – and all my paperwork was missing, so I had no evidence to back up what I was saying. I felt like the whole world was against me. The case had really affected everything in my life – financially, my relationships and my health. I was beside myself with financial and emotional stress. I knew then that it was only Allah who I could rely on.

On the morning of the court case, I woke up and said: 'Allah protect me and save me from further anxieties and stress from happening. Allah, this can only happen by Your Mercy – please forgive me. Please allow this case not to go against me.'

I had that belief that Allah would find a way and that the impossible can become possible. I reminded myself that He can say, 'Be' – and it will be. Making du'a was the only preparation I could do for the court case – and then leave the rest to Allah [subhanahu wa ta'ala].

On the day of the case, the judge was lenient, by Allah's Mercy, and the property was returned to me. I was then able to sell it, and my financial difficulties were lifted. But there is something else too, besides Him showing mercy to me and answering my du'a. I think something else was happening that day. I feel as though the outcome was due to someone else's du'a that was accepted.

Ever since I got involved with volunteer work serving the ummah, I used to always say to my wife: 'The work that we do, the khidmah [service] – it takes a lot of time, effort, energy. People don't realise how much is involved. Sometimes it can cause a strain, working too much. But all the khidmah you do towards the community, all the young people that we serve – you never know, it might be a parent of someone we help who will make du'a for us.' And I think that's what happened. That day in court, I doubt the outcome was down to my du'a. And it wasn't due to my emaan either – there's so much weakness in it. I believe it was someone else's du'a that got accepted and because of such du'a and blessings, Allah helped me.

I believe because I was in Allah's service, He came to my aid. It makes me emotional just to think about it. When you're doing His work and carrying out His work, He allows ease for certain circumstances in your life. He sends blessings. You wonder where a blessing came from, where that energy came from – and it's because of all the efforts you put in serving the community. We don't know whose du'a will be accepted. But whenever we have an opportunity to ask people to make du'a for us, we should – we don't know who is so close to Allah that their du'a will be accepted.

I should have ensured all the paperwork was in order when I rented out my house. But there was a bigger lesson. That Allah, who is the Judge, is always lenient with us when we think about all the sins and mistakes we commit. He is so Merciful. He is also the Judge on the Day of Judgement. That level of worry and concern I had for the court case is nothing in comparison to the worry and concern I have for my case on the Day of Judgement. But I know, so long as I get my 'paperwork' done in this life, I will always be met with His Leniency and Mercy.

Develop Your Du’a

Dear reader, be good to people. Do good for people. For the supplications of others are precious. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Two supplications have no barrier between them and Allah: the supplication of the oppressed, and the supplication of a man for his brother behind his back.
>
> Al-Tabaraani, *Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir*

He (ﷺ) also said:

> The supplication of a Muslim for his (Muslim) brother in his absence will certainly be answered. Every time he makes a supplication for good for his brother, the angel appointed for this particular task says: ‘Ameen! May it be for you, too.’
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

The value of someone else’s du’a for your du’a

Allah (‘azza wa jal) loves the love and unity between believers so much that He ordered His obedient creation, the angels, to make du’a for the one who asked on his brother or sister’s behalf by saying: ‘Ameen, and for you too.’ There is a win-win for both parties. The honour granted to the one receiving du’a from his brother or sister and the one who made du’a for his brother and sister reminds me of the following hadith, in which the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Verily, Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Where are those who love each other for the sake of My Majesty? Today, I will

> shelter them in My Shade on a day when there is no shade but Mine.'
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

Dear reader, never underestimate the reward for coming to the aid of your brother or sister, even if that is through du'a. In fact, if you want to truly experience transformation in your du'a and your life, make a commitment to be of service to others. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of the world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens on the Day of Judgement. And whoever helps ease a difficulty in the world, Allah will grant him ease from a difficulty in the world and in the Hereafter. And whoever covers (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will cover (his faults) for him in the world and the Hereafter. And Allah is engaged in helping the worshipper as long as the worshipper is engaged in helping his brother.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

The difference someone else's du'a makes to your du'a

At the time when I established my charity Solace UK for women who had embraced Islam and found themselves in difficulty, I had a five-year-old, a two-and-a-half-year-old and a six-month-old. I was so worried that the charity was taking too much of my energy and time. I would look at other sisters who would cook these amazing meals for their families – while I could only pull together a simple meal as all my time was invested in the charity.

In the first few months after the charity was launched, a well-known sheikh shared some powerful advice that has stayed with me. He said, 'Umm Raiyaan, you're not going to be able to do the things you want to do

for your kids. But I guarantee, if your intention is sincere in doing this work for the sake of Allah, you will see the return in your children.' And to this day, I have seen barakah (the power of blessings), but not because of anything I have done. I am flawed. It is because of Allah's Mercy, and because of barakah that is sent to those who work in His Way. I just pray He accepts my efforts. I believe when you do something for the sake of Allah, He brings you that which you can't achieve, because your time is invested in His Work. He brings that back.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> The most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim happy, or to remove one of his troubles, or to forgive his debt, or to feed his hunger. That I walk with a brother regarding a need is more beloved to me than that I seclude myself in this mosque in Al-Madinah for a month. Whoever walks with his brother regarding a need until he secures it for him, then Allah the Exalted will make his footing firm across the bridge on the day when the footings are shaken."
>
> *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*

How someone else's du'a deepens your relationship with Allah

When our beloved Prophet (ﷺ) received revelation and ran to his beloved wife out of fear, having encountered the Angel Jibreel (alayhis-salam), Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) comforted him and said:

> By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you, for you keep good relations with your family, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously, and assist the deserving people who have been afflicted with calamity.
>
> *Sahih Bukhari*

The Prophet's (ﷺ) turning to his wife at this time was no coincidence. It showed the beauty and closeness in their marriage. And neither was it a coincidence that Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) offered him this form of solace. For in it were comforting words for the billions of Muslims who were yet to exist. It is this: never will Allah let you down when you are one who treats others well, comes to the aid of people, serves them and assists them when they are in need. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever would love to be shaded in the shade of Allah, let him help someone in hardship or waive a loan.
>
> *Sunan Ibn Majah*

My dear reader, as you continue to make du'a, ensure you are seeking out ways to assist others, for:

> Allah will be at the assistance of His slave so long as such a person is at the assistance of his brother.
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

It's Your Turn – Assist and Make Du'a for Others

Come to the aid of your brothers and sisters, and observe how Allah responds to your needs.

- Find a new volunteering opportunity.
- As you go about your day, seek out ways to be of service to others, whispering to Allah: 'This is for You.'
- Make it a habit to make du'a for people in their absence.

Allah, Transform My Du’a

Rabbi, honour me with opportunities to spend time in working for this deen. Increase me in wealth, place barakah in my time, grant me good health and help me identify my skills, so that I may always be in a position of supporting others. And when I do, ya Rabbi, accept these small efforts of mine sincerely for Your Sake. When I forget to make du’a or my du’a is suspended because of my sins and imperfections, bestow Your Mercy on me. Be at my assistance for having provided help for Your servants. My Lord, I ask You to reward all of those who make du’a for me in my absence. Remind me that we are all in this together – trying our best, doing our best with the hope of journeying to You and Your Jannah. And so, remind me to make du’a for others too. So that we may all bask in Your Acceptance, Your Mercy, Your Generosity and Your Light.

21

Wrap Up Your Du’a with Salawaat and Praise

Now we come to the finale of your du’a. Dear reader, take a deep breath and let me lead you through the last part of this journey. The scholar Abu Sulaymaan al-Daaraani (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> Whoever wants to ask Allah for what he needs, let him start by sending blessings upon the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), then ask for what he needs, then end his prayer with blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ), for his sending blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) will be accepted, and Allah is too Generous to refuse what comes in between.

After this, Your Lord Most High, who loves to hear from you, says in the Qur’an:

> Their call therein will be ‘How Perfect You are, O Allah’, and their greeting therein will be ‘Peace’ and the end of their call will be ‘Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.’
>
> Surah Yunus 10:10

Dear reader, how can you not end your du’a with the praise of Allah when He (‘azza wa jal) brought you to du’a, loves you for your du’a, forgives you during and because of your du’a, draws you near Him through the intimate nature of du’a, and rewards you because du’a is worship? You are granted all of this even before He responds to your du’a! Subhana’Allah. This is Allah. So, praise Him with the most beautiful praise. I end with the words

of the Amir al-Mumineen Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

> I am not worried about whether my du’a will be responded to, but rather, I am worried about whether I will be able to make du’a or not. So, if I have been guided (by Allah) then (I know) that the response will come with it.
>
> Umar ibn al-Khattab Al-Awayishah

Treat your du’a as something so incredibly precious that you wrap it up with a big red bow, sending it off with salawaat upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and praise of Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala). Dear reader, you have prepared your heart. You have refined your du’a. In the coming chapters, we will consider how to navigate your response to Allah’s Divine Answer.

Part 4:

AFTER DU'A

Dear reader, you have made your du'a with everything you are and everything you have at your disposal. The most difficult stage of the journey of du'a is waiting for Allah's Response.

On the one hand, you are like a lover who has poured his or her heart out to your Beloved, anxiously awaiting a reply.

On the other hand, you need not be anxious as to whether your love is reciprocal. With your Rabb, it always is.

Every response to du'a is a form of His Love, His Protection. It is always His Gift to you because He only gives you the very best.

Every response is His Mercy manifested.

In this part of the book, you will discover stories and tools to help you navigate the varying responses to your du'a: Yes, Not Yet, and No.

22

Every Du’a is Answered

Dear reader, it is my hope that if you have read every single story thus far, internalised the ‘Develop Your Du’a’ guidance in each chapter, and engaged as much as you can with the practical sections at the end of each chapter, that your heart and du’a have been transformed considerably by His Permission, with Him and for Him. Now comes the real test of your faith: to have full belief and faith in the Words of your Lord and His Messenger (ﷺ). Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) says:

> Your Lord has proclaimed: call upon Me, I will respond to you.
>
> Surah Ghafir 40:60

So what does this mean, specifically for you? It means that every single du’a you make will be responded to by Allah (‘azza wa jal). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: ‘There is no servant of Allah who makes du’a except that Allah will give him what he wants, or will give him something equivalent, or will avert a calamity away’ (Musnad Ahmad). All you need to focus on is your sincerity, your vulnerability with Allah and ensuring that the conditions of du’a are met, and your du’a is guaranteed to be answered in one of three ways:

1. You will get what you ask for.
2. You will receive something equivalent to what you asked for. This happens when Allah knows that what you asked for is not good for you, so you are given something else that is equally beneficial.

3. A calamity that was destined for you is averted.

Dearest reader, every single time you ask, you are given something in return, subhana'Allah! When the companions (may Allah be pleased with them) heard this from the Prophet (ﷺ), they said: 'If that is the case, we will ask for more.' He (ﷺ) responded beautifully: 'Allah has even more.' (Sunan Ahmad)

If you still doubt whether every du'a is answered, then come, let me hold you by the hand as I introduce you to further words of the Prophet (ﷺ)who said:

> The supplication of every one of you will be granted if he does not get impatient and say (for example): 'I supplicated my Rabb but my prayer has not been granted.'
>
> *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*

And if this weren't enough, then here is more proof that your du'a will be answered; the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> The supplication of a slave continues to be granted as long as he does not supplicate for a sinful thing, or for something that would cut off the ties of kinship, and he does not grow impatient. It was said: 'O Messenger of Allah! What does growing impatient mean?' He (ﷺ) said, 'It is one's saying: "I supplicated again and again but I do not think that my prayer will be answered." Then he becomes frustrated and gives up supplication altogether.'
>
> *Riyad as-Saliheen*

Know with certainty that every single time you raise your hands and call upon your Lord, your du'a is answered. Embed this deep within you. You must rely on Him fully. Your Lord wants to be in relationship with you. He loves you. He wants to bestow His Mercy upon you. He wants you near Him. He wants you to win in this life so that you may truly win the ultimate prize in the next life.

Every single du’a you make will be responded to in a very specific way, especially for you, so that you may emerge as a winner with Rabbul-Alameen – the Lord of the Worlds. And that right there is the key to navigating His Response to your du’a – each and every one. Because Allah (‘azza wa jal) wants you to win in both worlds, He will always give you what you want if that will make you win. And if it won’t, then He will give you something equivalent to push you forward in this life so that you still win. And if there isn’t an equivalent, then He will remove an obstacle – a calamity that was destined for you – so that you most definitely win. My dear reader, knowing all of this, what is stopping you from making du’a? In fact, knowing this should push you towards making more du’a!

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Verily, the most helpless of people are those unable to supplicate.
>
> *Shu’ab al-Iman*

Never be one of them. Make du’a. As we move into the stories and tools in this final part of the book, I have a message for you: make du’a. Make du’a. Make du’a. And never think your du’a is too small or too big. To ask for the smallest thing, and for what seems like the most impossible thing, is you showing your Rabb that you are His humble, needy servant and you know Him to be your Powerful, Able Creator. You have a Lord who loves when you make du’a. The poet Sufyan Ath-Thawri used to say:

> O You Who love most those who ask of You, and O You Who hate most those who do not ask of You, and there is no one like that apart from You, O Lord.
>
> Ibn Abi Hatim

Similarly, the poet said: ‘Allah hates not to be asked, and the son of Adam hates to be asked.’ So ask Him for the small things and the big things. Ask Him for the dunya and the akhirah. Ask Allah – for He is a Lord who loves to be asked and will love you more for your asking.

23

When the Answer is Yes and Allah Gives You More

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

‘Verily, Allah will put His servant to trial in what He gives him. Whoever is content with what Allah has apportioned for him, then Allah will bless him in it and expand it. Whoever is not content, he will never be blessed in it.’

Musnad Aḥmad

Every single believer makes du’a hoping the answer will be that which they want. And when it is a Yes, there’s a sense of relief, gratitude and pure elation that your Lord heard and responded. That elation becomes something far deeper when, over time, you see that not only did Al-Mujeeb, The One Who Responds, hear you but He turned to you with His Generosity and answered other du’a at the same time that you did not even know you were making, but which perhaps deep within the chambers of your heart, you longed for.

Allow me to share the story of Danielle, who is a revert to Islam from Mauritian and Jamaican roots. Residing in the North of the UK, her Northern accent and bubbly nature always bring a smile to my face. Our paths crossed as a direct result of a du’a she made, part of which she shares in her story …

Danielle's Story



There was a time where I was going through a lot of difficulties – piling up one above another. There was some dhulm [oppression] done to me and my family. One of my aunties was very ill and just after she passed away, my mum asked me to take on my auntie's house to ensure that my grandma and my auntie's little girl could go on living there. My auntie was like a second mother to me, and in my distressed state I naïvely took on the responsibility. Complications began when suddenly, nearly 15 years after she passed, I was accused of stealing money, acquiring the property illegally and also harming my grandma! This was instigated by family members who wanted the house and money. Threats were issued and my name was dragged through the mud. I had to spend money that I didn't have on a solicitor to protect myself. The awful accusations by my own family cut deeply.

On top of that, I was experiencing difficulties with infertility. After I had two miscarriages, my husband and I started to go through IVF. But it wasn't straightforward for me due to the auto-immune issue I have. I felt prodded and poked by all the treatments – like alien experiments were taking place on me. I had a sense of distance from my body and felt really awful about myself.

Additionally, I was so unhappy at work. I was doing some consultancy work at the same time, which I enjoyed, but my main employment was as a service manager in social care. Although I was part of the senior management team, I was being left out of decision-making and excluded from meetings. I felt so demotivated and devalued. I would often come home and just cry.

So at this point in my life, I was making two du'a at the same time. I had been making du'a regarding the situation with my family. And I asked Allah to relieve me from the difficulties at work. But then my du'a started to change. I said to myself: 'You keep saying you have trust in Allah – that you have tawakkul – but do you really? This

situation is the real test of that.' I had told myself many times: 'Trust in Allah, trust in Allah.' But I had to ask myself: 'Am I acting on it? Am I actually doing it?' I had to take that step towards tawakkul and prove what I was saying. So I asked Allah: 'Let me have tawakkul and reliance on You. You are the only one that will get me through both these situations.'

I distanced myself from the family problems and solely relied on Allah to navigate through it. I started making du'a for my relatives who had caused me so much harm. I made du'a for their guidance. It was difficult making du'a for those who hurt me, but I did. I was doing that in spite of myself. I did it because I knew I had to.

With the work situation, again my du'a changed and I began to ask: 'O Allah, allow me to use the gifts you have given me fi sabilillah – for something that is pleasing to you. Use me for good.' I started to make this second du'a in tahajjud.

Then something just said to me: 'You've already started to do your consultancy work on the side. So – leave this job.' I spoke to my husband, prayed istikharaa, handed in my notice and left. Things became more financially difficult, of course, but because I had been making du'a for tawakkul, I just felt really content despite all the challenges. Then the situation with my relatives was resolved. I was able to show that their allegations about me were untrue. That du'a had been answered.

One day, I got an email about a job vacancy with the charity Solace UK. My husband said to me straightaway: 'Go for it! You've always wanted to work with them.' I wasn't sure. I was waiting to hear about other applications and didn't have time to apply – but when it got to the day of the deadline, I felt really sorry that I'd missed it. I made du'a: 'O Allah, it's in your Hands.'

Shortly afterwards, I got an email telling me that the deadline for applications had been extended by three days. I asked myself: 'Is Allah telling me something?' And I applied immediately. I got the job. Allah answered the du'a of me being able to use my skills really immediately and quickly. It was wonderful.

Other things were still going on with my family, but I kept with my commitment to have tawakkul and focused on this new blessing. And

then I received a message from you, Aliyah, that would change so much in my life.

You suddenly asked me: 'Have you been to Hajj?' I remember reading your message and thinking: 'Huh? This can't be – no – this is just a random question.'

I told you that I hadn't been to Hajj, and you said that an opportunity had come up through an anonymous sponsor – and did I want to go? I didn't want to get too excited by the prospect that it could actually happen. Because I had always made du'a: 'O Allah, I want to visit Your House', but I never thought it was possible. Subhana'Allah, it happened. My Hajj was paid for in full. It was almost as though by me making du'a for tawakkul and being steadfast, Allah was answering the du'a of my heart – the du'a I couldn't even put into words. It's like I didn't know the remedy I needed. Allah gave me the best one possible. I really felt as though Allah was saying: 'You said you have tawakkul. I can see you're trying. So I'm going to gift you the ease that you didn't know you needed.' I am overwhelmed and in awe of the sheer Mercy of Allah.

Performing Hajj, it was as though my chest burst open, because I was and still am acutely aware that I have done nothing to deserve the honour He bestowed on me, but His Mercy and Love are infinite and unfathomable. It felt as though, through all the tests and trials, Allah was showing me that by having tawakkul and relying solely on Him, crying to Him, the reward and ease will be so sweet and so beautiful that you will want to experience that pain and hardship all over again, just to get even a glimpse of that sweetness and draw closer to Him. Imagine, after a du'a I was consciously making was answered, an invitation from the Lord of the Worlds to His House! Alhamdulillah, there is nothing without la ilaha illAllah and I am nothing without it.

Develop Your Trust in Allah's Response to Your Du'a

Dear reader, there are two lessons in Danielle's story that I wish to draw your attention to as you await the answer to your own du'a. In the course of your life, there will be people who will harm you. You will feel at a loss when the very ones who hurt you appear to be in a position of gain. But know this: your du'a as one who is oppressed is a du'a mustajaab (a du'a that is certainly answered). The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

> Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no veil between it and Allah.
>
> *Sahih Bukhari*

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said:

> There are three supplications which are answered: the supplication of the person who is wronged, the supplication of the traveller, and the supplication of a parent for his child.
>
> *Adab al-Mufrad*

And so, if you ever find yourself as one who has been oppressed, ground yourself in the absolute knowledge that the answer to your du'a is but a matter of time.

The second lesson from Danielle's story is the power of istikharaa. Istikharaa is a very powerful tool, and comes in two stages. It is two raka'ah (units of prayer) which is followed by the following du'a found in *Hisnul Muslim*:

> O Allah, I seek guidance from Your Knowledge and Power from Your Might, and I ask You from Your tremendous favour. Verily, You have Power and I do not have power, and You know and I do not know. You are the Knowing of the Unseen. O Allah, if You know that this matter is good for my religion and my livelihood and my fate, or if it is better for my present and latter needs, then decree it for me and make it easy for me and bless me in it. But if You know that this matter is evil for my religion and my livelihood and my fate, or if it is worse for my present and latter needs, then divert it

> from me and keep me away from it, and decree what is good for me and then make me content with it.

The great scholar Ibn Abi Jamra (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> The wisdom behind putting the salah before the istikharah is that the istikharah combines both the good of this world and the next. Just as in this dunya, a person needs to go to the one he needs something from and win their favour and then put their need before them, the salah precedes the supplication. It is like knocking at the door of the King and presenting yourself before Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) and making sujud and humbling yourself and then spreading your hands and presenting your need.
>
> Ibn Abi Jamra

Danielle prayed istikharaa to leave her job. And not only did she find another job where she could use her skills, but through getting that job she was blessed with the opportunity to go to Hajj for free. The wording of the istikharaa du'a is very specific: 'O Allah, if you know that this matter (name of the matter) is good for me in my religion and in my life and for my welfare in the life to come, then ordain it for me and make it easy for me, then bless me in it.'

And the Arabic phrase is 'baarik lee feehi', which means 'to place barakah (blessings) therein'.

Istikharaa is du'a on another level. It is making a decision and then taking it to Allah, relying on His Knowledge of the future. The servant pauses life: makes wudu – purifies him- or herself, stands in prayer and bows, and then makes sujood, parts of an optional prayer, which is a choice to depend on Allah. And then comes the du'a – asking Allah, by His Knowledge of your unseen future, that if this is good for you, to bring it to you and you to it. And if it isn't, then to distance it from you and you from it.

Danielle made istikharaa to leave her job. She then did what many people don't do after praying istikharaa. She followed up her du'a with action. She handed in her notice, waiting to see if Allah facilitated it or blocked it, showing her if her decision was best or not for her dunya and akhirah. It

was best for her to leave. Allah facilitated her. And then came the barakah – the legal case was dismissed, she was given a new better job and then the greatest reward: Hajj.

Dear reader, where possible, aim for the barakah found in istikharaa. Pray istikharaa as much as you can – for the big things and the small. The Prophet (ﷺ) understood the power of istikharaa when he said:

> From the blessing of the son of Ādam is the ability to seek good from Allah, doing istikharaa with Allah. Also from the blessing of the son of Ādam is that they are pleased with whatever Allah has decreed for them. From the wretchedness of the children of Ādam is when he leaves doing istikharaa with Allah. Also, from the wretchedness of the human being is that the human being is displeased with what Allah has decreed for him.
>
> *Musnad Aḥmad*

Whenever you can, take your own du'a to new heights through itsikharaa. If someone approaches me and tells me of a need they have or something they really want, I look them straight in the eye, smile and tell them: set your alarm so that you pray in the last part of the night, take your du'a to Allah at this blessed time and do so through istikharaa. Be excited about the response to your du'a. If Allah answers it in the way that you hoped, through His Generosity, you will be given so much more!

It's Your Turn – Hope for Allah's Barakah

When you ask Allah, expect more. As part of this, you can take the following actions.

- Memorise the istikharaa prayer in Arabic and your mother tongue.

- Take your need to Allah in tahajjud, if possible through the istikharaa prayer.
- Follow up immediately with an action in line with the decision you took.
- Whether you pray istikharaa or make du’a, show Allah that you expect the best from Him. Do so by living life as though the answer to your du’a has already arrived.

Allah, Transform My Response to Your Answer to My Du’a

Rabbi, prevent me from ever perceiving You to be One who will simply answer my du’a. Remove poverty from my expectations of You. Instead, place generosity there. Correct my perception of You so that I always expect You to answer my du’a in the best way, and also expect more and more from You. I know You are who I think You to be, and so I choose to perceive You as a Lord who Generously gives – and gives more.

24

When the Answer is Yes and Comes with a Test

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

‘When Allah loves a people, He afflicts them with trials.’

Al-Tabaraani, Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir

Anas ibn Malik reported: ‘The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was once standing over a hole and he said: “If hardship were to enter this hole, ease would surely follow it, go inside, and take it out.” Then, Allah Almighty revealed the verse: “Verily, with the hardship comes an ease, with the hardship comes an ease.”’ (94:5–6)

Al-Mustadrak ‘alá al-Ṣaḥīḥayn

When Allah (‘azza wa jal) responds to a du’a request with Yes, you probably never think that it might come with a difficulty. Logically this may not make sense. You are given what you wanted, which automatically should entail a positive outcome. You never expect other than this. But Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) operates in a manner that is beyond human comprehension. And He does so with Intention and Wisdom. So much so, that even when a Yes is accompanied by a difficulty, there is always khair (good) in it for you.

Nezaket, known to her friends as Nez, is Turkish Cypriot and was born and grew up in the UK. Nez is a dear friend of mine whom I've known for nearly twenty years. As a result, I know her story well. I knew it had to be included in this book as a way of showcasing that sometimes when Allah loves a servant, He not only answers their du'a, but elevates them to another level by testing them with it. (Again, I should mention that it includes details of pregnancy problems and loss.)

Nez's Story



After giving birth to my first child, I never thought I would have problems conceiving another child. But I did. While friends around me were having their second, third and fourth children, I just couldn't conceive. My daughter would ask me why she didn't have siblings and I really wanted to give her that. But if I shared my difficulty with others, I would be told: 'Be grateful you already have a child.' I sometimes began to question whether I was ungrateful for wanting more children.

If Allah knows it is best for me to have more children, I thought, I need to do whatever I can to make it happen. So I continued making du'a. I focused on Him being able to do anything. He is The King of Kings – there's no limit to Allah. So why was I limiting myself and feeling sorry for myself?

I changed my mindset and made a lot of du'a. I also did all that I could to take care of my mental health and physical health. But despite my new mindset and efforts, I started to feel low. I'd had two miscarriages in ten years of trying. That's when my husband and I decided to go for IVF.

Alhamdulillah, it resulted in a successful pregnancy. This was how my first du'a was answered. It was one of the biggest things that has happened to me. It changed my relationship with Allah. I can't tell you how close I was to Allah during that time.

Then we discovered that we had a triplet pregnancy. The way it was revealed to us was a blessing. Only one baby was showing in the first scan. It was as if Allah was easing us into what was to come. Then in the second scan, they saw the second baby, and told us they were identical twins. And in the third scan, they saw the third baby, who was non-identical. Allah was giving us an opportunity to take in what was about to happen.

I was twenty-nine weeks pregnant when we found out that one of my babies had passed away. The sonographer couldn't tell us which baby it was. They called a specialist in and they too couldn't tell. They didn't have the power or knowledge. I was so distraught after hearing the news that I kept asking Allah: 'Don't separate the babies from me when they're born.' I made this du'a knowing that there was a high chance they would be premature and placed in the intensive care unit. And if there weren't enough incubators, then they would split them up – possibly even in different hospitals. My anxiety about this was so high. I was left in the unknown, carrying two babies that were alive and one baby that had passed, for five weeks.

Towards the end of the pregnancy, I developed a severe rash that spread all over my body. The hospital wanted me to go to thirty-six weeks before a scheduled C-section, but with two weeks still to go, I just couldn't cope with the itchiness. I called up my specialist and told her I couldn't go on. At thirty-four weeks, by C-section, Sara and Safiya came into the world and it was then that it was confirmed which baby had passed away.

The moment the girls left my body was a strange moment. I knew there was a lot to be done – incubators for two of the babies and a janazah [funeral] to arrange. On top of that, I was very ill immediately after the birth. My rash worsened and the itching became so severe that I was now bleeding everywhere. The doctors had no idea what was causing the reaction and took me off all medication, including pain relief for my C-section. I was itching uncontrollably, with no pain relief, crying. I was all over the place. My du'a had been answered, but my body was falling apart.

We named our lost baby Rahma, which means 'mercy'. I was trying to figure out how I could attend the janazah but also be with

two babies in hospital. The idea of parting from them left me beside myself with worry, especially as I had made my du'a to never be separated from them.

Arriving at the cemetery was very, very hard. I found I couldn't walk. I had been able to walk slowly in the hospital, but now I could not. It wasn't due to the C-section. It was the grief – it was so heavy on me. I asked the funeral directors if I could see her before she was buried as I hadn't seen her properly after birth. The midwives had brought her to me, dressed in the outfit I had bought her but she was wrapped in a blanket such that only half of her face was revealed as well as one hand and one foot. They had tried to protect me from seeing the extent of damage from the last five weeks she'd spent in my womb.

The funeral director advised me not to see her but respected my decision. I went into the room to see her. She was shrouded. It was there where I broke down, and I just couldn't do it.

My husband carried her and buried her small body.

Then another du'a was answered. Allah made it so that the babies did not leave my side in the hospital, except for the few hours for the janazah. And He did so by changing the scales – literally. Sara was so tiny that she should have been placed in ICU, but the scales had somehow showed a higher weight, so she was left with me and Safiya. When the hospital realised later on that there had been a mistake, they put all three of us in a room in the ICU unit. That was Allah taking care of me. He decreed that I would be permanently separated from Rahma in this life, but then he answered my du'a with regards to the other two in the most amazing of ways.

When we got home, Rahma's passing really hit me. People were excited – Alhamdulillah, I had been given two healthy babies. I was a bit of a robot at that point, just doing everything that was necessary. But as I breastfed in the middle of the night, in the silence, all the pain came out. I would cry and grieve deeply. I felt there were so many lessons in the whole journey for me. So many of those lessons opened my eyes and just showed me so much. It changed everything for me – spiritually, physically and mentally.

One of the biggest comforts I could have been given showed me the extent of Allah's Mercy in this entire situation. Rahma was the identical twin of Safiya, and Sara is the third. So every day that I look at Safiya, I know what Rahma would have looked like because her identical twin is with me. This is a huge mercy for me as a mother. Allah answered my du'a, tested me with it, but looked after me. This was Allah answering my du'a and making things merciful for me during the biggest test of my life. It was such an emotional rollercoaster. There were so many times when Allah was reminding us that He was giving us what we wanted, and He was answering our du'a with so much Mercy along the way.

And throughout it all, I was reminded time and time again that though Allah has answered our du'a in giving us more children, He was also reminding us that He was the One who was in control of everything.

Seeing what Allah was capable of doing changed my relationship with Him. The way He answered, the way He gave, the way He showed me things that I didn't know I needed. My Lord knows my heart and what I can bear. He has kept Rahma for Jannah and given me more than what I asked for in this dunya – two beautiful, healthy girls who have grown so strong and resilient. Allah never just answers our du'a. There is always so much more to it than just the du'a being answered. I believe we must always search for what that might be and ask ourselves: what is Allah showing me through this?

Develop Your Trust in Allah's Response to Your Du'a

Dear reader, when we think of the answer to a du'a being Yes, we always assume that this Yes will always mean khair – a good outcome with no difficulty. And similarly, we assume that Allah's answer of No to our du'a will be something that will bring us sadness. But this is not always the case. In Nez's case, Allah responded to her du'a by gifting her two babies – but

also tested her with health problems and with the passing of her third baby. Sometimes a Yes that is coupled with a test is Allah's way of not only responding, but in being more Loving too. Because every test and trial is the Lord of the Heavens and Earth extending His Love to you.

Ibn al-Qayyim says:

> Were it not that Allah treats His slaves with the remedy of trials and calamities, they would transgress and overstep the mark. When Allah wills good for His slaves, He gives him the medicine of calamities and trials according to his situation, so as to cure him from all fatal illnesses and diseases, until He purifies and cleanses him, and then makes him qualified for the most honourable position in this world, which is that of being a true slave of Allah, and for the greatest reward in the Hereafter, which is that of seeing Him and being close to Him.
>
> *Zaad al-Ma'ad*

Dear reader, you will never comprehend the Mercy of Allah and how He deals with you. Sometimes, years later we say: 'Ah! That's why!' And sometimes we will only truly know in the next life. Nez will never know the wisdom of Allah in decreeing why Rahma did not join her sisters in this life. But even with such a test, there was the silver lining of His Mercy, as we have seen in her story. And, dear reader, this is how Allah deals with you too. When He says Yes and it comes with a difficulty, always remember that He wants further good for you. He wants to give you, and withhold from you, so that your journey to Him and His Paradise is smoother.

Du'a is so much more than the asking of the servant and the Response of the Master. It is Allah interacting with your life in such an intimate way, having Keys to the Unseen and unlocking doors for you, which may not make sense at the time of your asking and receiving. But know, in the words of the scholar Ibn Ata'illah:

> Sometimes He gives while depriving you, and sometimes He deprives while giving to you.

Al-Hikam al-Ata'iyyah

And in all cases, your Rabb, your Merciful Rabb, is giving to you. Remember that. Ibn al-Qayyim says:

> It was from His Mercy that He blemished their worldly life for them and made it imperfect. This was so they would not feel comfortable in it nor feel secure regarding it, and so they would aspire for the endless enjoyment in His Abode and in His Company. So in reality, He deprived them so that He could give them, and He tried them so that He would relieve them, and He put them to death so that He would give them (everlasting life).

Ighathat al-Lahfan

It's Your Turn – Learn to Trust when the Outcome Comes with a Test

Trust that any tests that come with the response to your du'a are good for you.

- Recall a time when a du'a was answered with a test. Find the bundles of Allah's Mercy within it.
- Whenever you encounter a test with an answered du'a, get curious as to what lesson Allah might be teaching you.
- Create a list of verses from the Qu'ran and ahadith that soothe your heart and help you navigate difficult times. You may want to start with the following hadith:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘Verily, Allah Almighty says: “When I put one of My faithful servants to trial and he praises Me despite his trial, he will rise from his bed free of sin like the day he was born from his mother.” The Almighty Lord says: “I have confined My servant and put him to trial, so he will be rewarded the same as he used to do when he was healthy.”’

Musnad Aḥmad

Allah, Transform My Response to Your Answer to My Du’a

Allah, You are my Lord and I am Your servant. I know You are not a Rabb who wants to destroy me. You are more Merciful than my own mother is to me. And so I know that with Your gifts come lessons. With Your permissions, come boundaries. For the attainment of Your Perfect Paradise, comes the imperfection of this dunya. I am here to worship You and so I submit and accept Your Decree. I trust what You have willed is best for me now and into the future – in this life and the next. Increase my trust in You. Increase my love for You as I observe the way You Mercifully intervene between me and what I ask for, even when it is not what I want or feel I need.

25

When the Answer is No – Trust in Allah

The companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) Abu Darda, may Allah be pleased with him, said: 'The pinnacle of faith is in four things: patience with the judgment of Allah, pleasure with the decree of Allah, sincerity and trust in Allah, and surrender to the Lord.'

Sharḥ Usul I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah

The meaning of being a Muslim is one who submits to Allah. Part of that is submission to Allah's Decision to say No when every cell in your body is hoping that He ('azza wa jal) will say Yes. This is hard, but the journey of faith is one where we work to become better and stronger in our resolve to worship Allah as believers who surrender to His Will and Plan – as Asma shares in her story.

Asma is a revert from the Caribbean. I met her at a halaqa (Islamic gathering) when we had both independently moved to South London in 2008. Her calm nature and beautiful character left me wanting to be near her more and more. She became a good friend who helped me set up my charity. Knowing how truly trusting Asma is of Allah, it was no surprise to me how she reacted to Allah's Response of No to her du'a. But what was beautiful is what came after.

Asma's Story



I wanted to go on Hajj for about five years. It was an intense longing – a desire so strong that it felt like it was a daily thought, in my subconscious, for years. A longing to be pleased with Allah's qadr intertwined with disappointment every time someone else was invited and I was not. I made so much du'a. I always saw Hajj as an invitation from Allah but it just hadn't happened for me. I had never been on Umrah, and I always wanted to go on Hajj, as it's an obligation. But every year there were obstacles so that I couldn't go. That is what I would make du'a for after prayer in tahajjud. When other people had gone, I felt I had failed in some way as I hadn't been invited.

I had specific issues due to my family's circumstances, and couldn't go on a long Hajj. Finally, I found a company that was able to meet all my requirements. We had provisionally booked and things were finally happening. All we were waiting for were our visas. Every day I would call the agency and ask: 'Is it sorted? Are we going?'

And one of the staff would say: 'Yes, don't worry about it.'

I tried to wait patiently, but I don't know if I succeeded in being patient. I did feel very anxious about having no control over the situation. This company had been recommended by a reliable friend, and the agent was very confident that he was able to get us our visas.

One day, two weeks before Hajj, when people were already leaving, the same staff member called me and said, 'I'm sorry, sister. I don't think you've been invited to go this year.'

My heart dropped, but then I spoke to Allah and said: 'Allah, help me to be pleased with the situation.'

I accepted the disappointment because I believe it is so important to accept Allah's Decree and to have settlement and contentment in your heart with it. At first, I did question myself as to why I was undeserving of the invitation, but then a shift occurred, where I experienced true acceptance. I no longer felt disappointment or

stress, and my body seemed to relax. A feeling of total submission came over me: that it is Allah who is in control. I believe that in all situations we should always be pleased with what Allah gives to us and His Decree.

Suddenly, subhana'Allah, a message came up on my phone about a Hajj trip. I phoned this brother at a different agency and the package they were offering tied in with my dates. I thought, okay, that's good. All my other requirements were met.

Within a few days, he had the visa sorted. I have no idea how he did it. There was just one thing remaining – we had to have our injections. And we only had a week left before we were due to depart. He said: 'Don't worry, sister. Next door we do injections.'

With such ease, we got them done and didn't have to wait for the certificates. My kids were young and Allah made it easy for me to find sisters to look after them. I went to Hajj and it was the best experience of my life. Everything went smoothly. The years before I went, there had been crushing due to crowds, but when I did it, it felt as though no one else was there. The heat that people complain about – it was fine for me. The rawdah that is crowded – subhana'Allah – it was like a space had been left for me. I prayed so easily. Sisters made a circle around me so I could do it.

The best day of my life was the Day of Arafah. I'm not the type of person to be emotional in front of people, but I wept that day uncontrollably.

Develop Your Trust in Allah's Response to Your Du'a

Asma's story teaches us that what you say and do at the moment you receive Allah's No as a response to your du'a can be the very development of your faith. Allah wants to see your response to His Response. This is the test of your emaan. It reminds me so much of the example found in the

female companion of the Prophet (ﷺ), Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her). Umm Salamah loved her husband very much. They had been of the early Muslims and part of the group who emigrated in the first hijrah to Ethiopia. One day she remembered that the Prophet (ﷺ) had said:

> ‘Whoever is married on earth will be married in paradise.’ So she said to her husband, Abu Salamah: ‘Let’s make a pact not to remarry after death so we can be in paradise together.’
> Upon hearing this Abu Salamah, in his mercy, love and foresight, responded: ‘No. When I die, marry someone else.’ He then directed his words to God and prayed: ‘After I’m gone, bless her with someone who is better and will not make her sad or do her harm.’
>
> Quoted in ‘Barred From That Which You Love’

When her husband died, Umm Salamah experienced intense grief. And yet, such was her faith, she remembered the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) who said:

> If any servant (of Allah) who suffers a calamity says: ‘We belong to Allah and to Him shall we return; O Allah, reward me for my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange for it’, Allah will give him reward for affliction and will give him something better than it in exchange.
>
> *Sahih Muslim*

Umm Salamah repeatedly said, ‘*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un* – We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.’ But she would also wonder how anyone could ever be better than Abu Salamah. Umm Salamah possessed intelligence and beauty. She was well sought after for marriage. And many wanted the reward of looking after a widow and her children. She declined all of her suitors, except one. She had wondered who could be better than her beloved late husband, and she received a proposal from the best of humankind, the Prophet (ﷺ).

Umm Salamah was put through the sort of test that you may have experienced or will come to experience, dear reader. She was tested as to what she would do when Allah gave her that which her heart did not want. She chose acceptance. She chose trust. She chose to remember her Lord. And she chose to place her test and grief within the context of the temporary nature of this world. She chose to remember that in between coming from Allah and returning to Him, there will be difficulties, but that they are simply a part of this transient life. She chose patience. She returned home to her fitrah – that state of natural inclination to submit to Allah.

And for all of that, she was rewarded – just as Asma was rewarded with Hajj through her beautiful acceptance and trust in Allah's Decree. Asma accepted Allah's No, not knowing at the time that it was only a delay. Dear reader, sometimes Allah delays the response to your du'a because He loves the one who calls upon Him and persists in doing so.

And perhaps the answer to your du'a is delayed because:

> It has also been related that when a righteous slave supplicates to Allah, exalted is He, Jibreel says: 'O Lord, your slave wants a need of his fulfilled.' So Allah says: 'Leave my slave; for I love him and love to hear his voice.'
>
> Al-Tabaraani

The scholar Ibn Uthaymeen (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> Do not hate a thing which Allah has chosen for you. Certainly whatever Allah has chosen for you has a greater benefit which you do not know about.
>
> *Riyad as-Saliheen*

And maybe, just maybe, dear reader, that benefit is your elevated rank in this life and the next. Perhaps this comes about because, at the time when it mattered most, when you wanted something so ardently and were a handspan away from it, and then Allah's Decree pulled it away from you, you displayed true submission. You embodied the true meaning of being Muslim and became beloved to The Beloved.

Contentment with Allah's decree in your du'a is something to aspire towards. The companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) developed firm trust in their complete surrender to Allah's Will. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, may Allah have mercy on him, would supplicate often, saying:

> O Allah, make me pleased with Your decree and bless me in Your providence, such that I would not like to hasten anything You delay, nor delay anything You hasten.
>
> Al-Ridda 'an Allah bi-Qada'ihi li-Ibn Abi al-Dunyā

Dearest reader, for the lovers of Allah, there is a nearness felt when your du'a is delayed or unanswered and you continue to call upon your Lord. I end this section with words of the scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah be pleased with him), which I hope will help you to develop a new understanding of what du'a can mean for you and your relationship with Him ('azza wa jal):

> Sometimes, I have a certain need that only Allah can fulfil, so I call upon Him. Then, I find that the door of dialogue with Allah opens up for me, and through it I taste the sweetness of discourse with Him and the joy of knowing Him that far surpasses the urgency of obtaining an answer to my prayer. And so I prefer for the answer to my prayer be delayed, for fear of losing this connection once my need is fulfilled.
>
> *Majmu al-Fatawa*

It's Your Turn – When the Answer is No, Trust He is Redirecting You

No is also an answer to du'a. But when No comes from Allah, it is a Yes to something better.

- Get curious – what might Allah be redirecting you to?

- When the answer to your du’a is No, say: ‘*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un* – To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.’
- Take a piece of paper and at the top, write the following heading: When the answer to my du’a is No, it may be because …’ List down all the beautiful khair-filled reasons why Allah may respond with No.
- Whenever you need to, refer to this list after you have said: ‘*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un*.’

Allah, Transform My Response to Your Answer to My Du’a

O Allah, when my human self feels disappointed, allow what my fitrah knows to reign supreme. For I testified to Your Oneness before I came into existence. And with that came the belief and submission that just as You created me and know me better than I know myself, You will say No, or say Not Yet, for my absolute betterment for this life and the next. Rabbi, I place my full trust in all the times You will deny, withhold and delay. You are my Protector and The Best Disposer of my affairs.

26

When the Answer is No and There is Still Hope

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

'When one of you calls upon Allah, let him hope for the greatest of things. Verily, nothing has any greatness over Allah.'

Sahih ibn Hibban

I remember a post I had written on social media with the title 'No is also an Answer from Allah'. I received a DM where a woman asked me: 'How do you know when the answer is No and when to stop asking?' It was an important question, and I hope Zahra's story teaches you an important lesson: there is always hope. Zahra is a revert from Lithuania. She's a busy mother of four young children whom she home educates. I met Zahra online a number of years ago and, on our returning to the UK, one of Zahra's children became friends with my youngest child. Zahra is one of the calmest and most sincere women I know. She loves Allah and I wish she knew how much Allah loves her, and that Allah knows best. I wish she knew, because I have always had a feeling she has doubted her position with Him. When she shared her story with me, she mentioned that this was true and how changing her perception of her position with her Rabb has changed the way she turns to Him ('azza wa jal).

Zahra's Story



I've always wanted to study a course related to psychology, so when I saw a specific Islamic psychology course at the beginning of 2023, I knew I had to apply. I called my dad in Lithuania and he went to my school to pick up my educational certificates. I translated them here and sent them to the college with my application form. The college told me they couldn't accept my documents because they were too brief. I couldn't understand why: they prove I did my secondary school education. But they advised me that they needed something more detailed.

I wasn't able to get another certificate and I didn't want to pay more translation fees, so I thought, 'Khair insha'Allah – it isn't meant to be.' I had prayed istikharaa. It didn't happen. It was for the best. I was happy.

And then Ramadan started and I read your book, Ramadan Reflections, *and for me, how you spoke about du'a was so beautiful. Your belief in du'a was inspiring. Just two days after Ramadan began, I saw a message online from a group called Muslim Psychologists. I'm not a psychologist, but because of my love for the subject, I like to be part of such groups and read articles.*

Two days after Ramadan, a flyer for a course in Islamic psychology was shared on the group. It was taking place at a college that was a short walk from where I lived. I thought, wow! This would be so good and it's so easy to get to. But the price was £1,199 and I knew I would never be able to afford it. Again, I thought: 'Khair insha'Allah.' But I really wanted to do it. It was so close to me, only once a week in the evening. I just couldn't pay. I sent the college an email and wrote: 'You offer a scholarship. I'm interested in applying.' I received a response that said that they wouldn't be able to offer a scholarship, but that they could give a 25 percent discount and accept payment in £300 instalments. But that was still too much.

I told myself: 'Subhana'Allah, khair insha'Allah. You know what. I'm going to make du'a.' And I did. I said: 'Allah, if there is a way for me to do this course, find it for me. I really want it.'

I made this du'a with conviction. I enjoyed making it. I felt connected to Allah. It was Ramadan and I felt I could speak to Allah. I knew if I made du'a, it would be possible and Allah would make a way for me. I say 'if' because before this, I wasn't really accustomed to making du'a. I always used to feel unworthy. I know this is wrong. I used to think I'm not that good a Muslim. But after reading your book and attending your book launch, and hearing you speak so beautifully about du'a, my du'a changed too, because I realised I am *worthy of making du'a. My mistakes are so big but Allah says that He is more Merciful than my mistakes, Subhana'Allah.*

Five days after I made this du'a, we received a letter from the government. It was saying we were entitled to three payments of £301, £300 and £299. The total was 75p more than the total after the 25 percent discount needed to pay for the course. When my husband came home and I showed him the letter, he was as shocked as I was at how close the amounts were. He just said, 'It's for you.' He knew that it was sent to me. And that is how I was able to start my dream course. This has changed my perception of how du'a can be answered. You also wrote something in your book: 'I want Allah to use me for this ummah.' This touched me. I want Allah to use me too, and I have already started to apply what I have learned with those around me. The possibilities are endless with du'a.

Develop Your Trust in Allah's Response to Your Du'a

To believe that you are worthy of being seen and heard opens the way to standing tall and achieving so much in your life. Imagine then, dear reader, when you internalise your worth in the Sight of your Lord. It changes your faith. It changes your relationship with Him. And it will change the way you perceive Him, speak with Him, hope and expect of Him and His Response to your du'a. Remember the hadith qudsi: 'I am as my servant thinks I am.'

When you believe with a full heart that you are worthy with Allah, then you will be treated as worthy by Allah. Zahra identified that worth, took her need to Allah in du'a and received a No. But she still had hope in Him to answer, because she knew she was worthy of being answered. Allah inspired her to not give up: to accept His decision, yes, but to keep going and be persistent. And to ask again.

And she did. She kept returning to Allah and asking Him with hope and certainty. Her understanding was simple yet profound. If she believed herself to be worthy enough of Him, then why wouldn't He answer her du'a? Her level of hope was met by His Rewarding Response. This can be your reality too. I am often asked: 'But when should I stop making du'a for something?' And the answer is: you can never and must never stop making du'a. Have so much hope you feel you will burst with excitement. Hope is beautiful. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

> Allah, Exalted is He, said: 'Son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you despite what you do, and I do not care. Son of Adam, even if your sins were to reach to the clouds of the sky, then you seek forgiveness from Me, I will forgive you. Son of Adam, even if you were to come to Me with nearly an Earth full of sins, and then you meet Me, not having associated anything with Me, then I will surely bring you as much as the Earth in forgiveness.'
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Dear reader, have hope. If you wish to see the fruits of your du'a, then plant the seed of hope before you make du'a, water it through du'a and maintain the growth of your du'a after you have uttered its last words and said, 'Ameen'. A plant can only grow through maintenance, removing anything that may harm it, nurturing it with sunlight and water, then waiting and hoping to see it bear fruit. This is true hope. Ibn al-Qayyim said:

> Every time the slave has good thoughts about Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala), perfects his hope in Him. And is truthful in his trust in Him, then indeed Allah will never ever disappoint him nor let him down.

> For He (‘azza wa jal) does not break the hope of the hoper, nor will He waste the deeds of the doer.
>
> *Al-Fawaid*

Make du’a. Water it with everything you have learned in this book. And have hope. How can you not?

It’s Your Turn – When the Answer Appears to Be No, Keep Hope Alive

Develop hope. Maintain it by holding on to the rope of Allah.

- Set yourself a goal. Write it down.
- Write down three reasons why you have hope that Allah can make this a possibility for you.
- Make du’a for it with full hope in Allah, mentioning your three reasons in your du’a to Him.
- Take immediate action towards your goal.
- Keep a record of how you feel about hope.
- Keep repeating these steps with both your small and big goals to develop your hope in your Lord’s Response to your du’a.

Allah, Transform My Response to Your Answer to My Du’a

O Allah, let the greatest burning flame in my heart be of hope in You. Place my hope in people, resources, systems, courses, books, teachers and lessons in their rightful place. They are simply means that You bring to me to answer my du’a, but they do not answer my du’a. Only You do, and only You will. Never let my hope in You begin to diminish and stop burning. Keep igniting the flame of hope in my heart so that it burns brightly and I

make du’a excitedly, like a child who knows the One who loves them will never disappoint.

27

When the Answer is No and it is Best for You

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: 'The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Verily, Allah Almighty sends down support in proportion to the need, and He sends down patience in proportion to the trial."'

Musnad al-Bazzar

Al-Sarri ibn Hassan (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: 'Abdul Wahid ibn Zayd, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "Contentment is one of the greatest doors to Allah, the Paradise of this world, and the repose of the worshippers."'

Hilyat al-Awliyā'

Quite simply, when Allah ('azza wa jal) says No and it is a firm no, it is only from a place of Absolute Love. Always remember that.

Nadia is my mentor. She is a friend to whom I turn for advice. I feel as though she is ten years ahead of me in her life, having experienced circumstances in which I now find myself. That's why I love hearing her speak, and her wisdom makes me question certain paths I was going to take. I made a du'a a number of years ago when I needed someone like her in my life. Allah brought her to me and she has been a vehicle of change for me professionally, emotionally and spiritually. I know some of

her relationship with du'a, and when I read the following words of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), I smile and think of her. He (ﷺ) said:

> Whoever wishes that Allah would respond to him during hardship and grief, then let him supplicate plentifully when at ease.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

What follows is a story Nadia had not shared with me until recently. It made me cry. For it is from Allah's Mercy that He says No, out of love for us.

Nadia's Story



My eldest brother and I have twenty years between us in age. My father passed away when I was three months old and Ahmed acted like a father to me. I would share everything with him about my life. He never judged me and always encouraged me to go the extra mile. He only had sons and would always tell me: 'You are the daughter I never had.' He was my backbone.

Ahmed was a very healthy man. But all of a sudden, they discovered cancer in his pancreas. At first I was convinced that he would get better. Everyone was making du'a that Allah would grant him shifaa [healing]. My hope was also in the fact that he was part of a clinical trial of the latest treatment. I was really hopeful Allah would answer all of our du'a. During the two years he was ill, I made a point of seeing him whenever I could, either in Dubai where we lived or in Canada where he and his family had moved.

But the cancer spread everywhere. I will never forget the phone call from his wife when she told me: 'He's dying.' I had to drop everything. I needed to see him. I remember my sister called me – she was worried about me travelling so far. It was a fourteen-hour flight and I had problems with my back and couldn't sit for long periods of time. On the journey, I had no way of finding out whether

he had already passed away. I just kept making du'a the whole time: 'O Allah, please allow me to see him. Don't let him die without me seeing him.'

I wanted him to know that I had travelled to be with him. He hadn't been told that I was on my way, but when his wife said to him, 'We have a surprise for you', he responded, 'Is Nadia coming?'

Allah didn't allow him to live much longer, but allowed me to witness his death. I managed to spend two hours with him, before he passed away while I was holding his hand. His son was holding his other hand. In the last few minutes before he died, the room was empty with just him, his wife, his son and myself. Peace descended. He was lying down as though he was ready to receive the angels. His son started reciting Qur'an in the most beautiful melodious voice. Ahmed was falling in and out of consciousness. He began to look up into the distance and we knew he could see the mala'ika [the angels]. We knew it was just a matter of minutes before he would leave us. I wasn't crying. It wasn't scary or sad. I knew I was going to miss him so much. But I was happy for him to have this beautiful end.

Afterwards, we were allowed to stay with him for a while, and the nurse came into the room and told us that when people die, the heart monitor tends to become erratic and goes very fast. But in Ahmed's case it was the opposite and she had never witnessed anything like it.

Afterwards my sister said to me, 'I didn't want you to go because I was really worried about you. But I'm glad you went. Allah allowed you to go so that you could share with us what you witnessed at Ahmed's time of death. It has enabled us to cope with losing him.'

I can't tell you how beautiful his janazah was. The number of people that attended! Allah facilitated this janazah for him – thousands of people came. The interactions I had with the people that spoke about him were so healing during my time of grief.

Allah is Al Lateef – The Subtle, The Kind. He [subhanahu wa ta'ala] allowed me to feel good about my brother's death even though it was such a sad occasion. Allah put this comfort in my

heart. Allah allowed his death not to be as sad as it would have been.

I miss him so much, but every time I think about how he passed away, I feel happy for him. Alhamdulillah.

My du'a for him to be healed was not answered. I wanted him in my life forever. The response to my du'a was No, but Allah allowed me to be with him at the time he passed away, gifting me with peace at witnessing his ending.

Develop Your Trust in Allah's Response to Your Du'a

Allah decreed a firm No as a response to Nadia's du'a. There was no room for hope, no way to trust that He would keep her beloved brother alive. Ahmed was dying. But even with this No, Nadia was given a gift that has carried her through her grief: a beautiful husn al khatimah (blessed ending) such that her human eyes shed tears of missing her brother, but her heart smiled in joy at his peaceful and blessed departure from this world as he continued his journey to Allah ('azza wa jal). There is a beautiful quote by the scholar Al-Shurnubi, who said:

> So, O aspirant, fulfil what Allah has instructed you with in respect to supplication, and submit to His will. Perhaps you will be responded to by Him withholding from you and giving you other than what you were seeking, by which you are then granted the greatest good, and even more.
>
> *Sharh al-Hikam*

I once gifted Nadia a leather journal and she was so excited to receive it. She immediately told me, 'Aliyah, this will be my new du'a book.'

'Nadia, what do you mean?' I asked.

She told me, ‘I have always kept a du’a book. I write down du’a from the Qur’an and sunnah as well as du’a I need to make for myself and others, or even the du’a others ask me to make for them. And then at times when du’a is mustajaab, I take out my du’a book and begin to make du’a. When I’m travelling, between Asr [third daily prayer] and Maghrib [fourth prayer] on Fridays, in Ramadan, between the adhaan [call to prayer] and the iqamah [second call to prayer] and other times.’

In my opinon, and Allah knows best, Nadia is a believer who makes du’a a lot during times of ease, so much so that she does not let work or anything else come in the way during these times. It is no wonder, then, that her du’a during times of hardship have always been answered in the most beautiful of ways, just as it was in the case of her brother Ahmed (may Allah have mercy upon him).

When Nadia found out that Ahmed was dying, what would she have gained at being upset, frustrated or even angry with Allah’s Decree? Nothing – for all of those soul-destroying emotions connected to the decree of Allah, interfere with our relationship with Him. But one who is patient at the time of being delivered No as a response will find so much more. Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

> ‘Verily, a man will seek the decision of Allah Almighty, and He chooses for him, yet he is displeased with his Almighty Lord. If he only waited to see the final result, he would find it is better for him.’
>
> Ibn al-Mubarak, *Kitab al-Zuhd wal-Raqa’iq*

Dear reader, when your Rabb decrees the very opposite of what you have been asking, remember the following words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

> Whoever among you has the door of supplication opened for him, the Door of Mercy is opened for him as well. Allah is not asked for anything more beloved to Him than to be asked for wellness. Supplication benefits by what is sent down, and what is not sent down. O servants of Allah, you must supplicate.
>
> *Sunan Tirmidhi*

Remember, your Lord wants to be in relationship with you. His No is not the ending of that relationship. It is not a rejection. Knowing that He will only bring you the very good so that you may win, His No is in fact a Yes to so much more. All that is required from you is to trust, be patient and await His Mercy disguised in His No.

It's Your Turn – When the Answer is No, Know it is Best

No is sometimes the most beautiful response from The Most Merciful.

- When the response to your du'a is a firm No, look at what is being said Yes to.
- Turn to friends who know Allah, love Him, live with Him and worship Him accordingly. Lean on them so that their complete trust in Allah rubs off on you.
- Practise patience.
- Make plentiful du'a during times of ease, so that your du'a during hardship is answered in the best of ways.

Allah, Transform My Response to Your Answer to My Du'a

My Beloved, when Your response is No, remind me of Your Might and Mercy. Place contentment in my heart with Your Decree. Tame my ego when it tries to oppose Your Will. Strengthen my faith in You when shaytaan does his best to use what is happening to ruin my connection to You. If there are any gaps in the faith I have in my du'a being responded to in the best of ways, fill those gaps with the cement of trust so that nothing may destroy what I have built with You: my relationship with du'a, my lifeline, my most intimate connection to You.

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When Your Du’a Connects with Another’s

And of them are some who made a covenant with Allah (saying): ‘If He bestowed on us of His Bounty, we will verily give Sadaqah [Zakah and voluntary charity in Allah’s Cause] and will be certainly among those who are righteous.’

Surah Tawbah 9:75

Marcia is a Catholic-raised Dominican woman I met when I delivered a class in Central London for new Muslims and women who are interested in Islam. Her story blew my mind. But little did I know at the time the extent to which the du’a of two people who had never met before would collide and that both would be answered through each other.

This is Marcia’s story and, well, I guess it’s my own, too.

Marcia’s Story



My son is autistic. From his late teens to his early twenties, he became reclusive and did not speak to anyone. I was desperately trying to build a relationship with him so that he would begin to communicate. He was prescribed medication but didn’t want to take it. Everyone said that he was suffering from depression. I was more

and more upset and worried. My partner and I had separated and our relationship was difficult. My son went to live with his father, which was also very upsetting to me. I didn't feel that it was helping him. I became desperate.

One night, a feeling came over me and an inner voice said: 'You just need to kneel down and pray to God, not Jesus, and ask for Him to bring your son home and for him to find God.'

I got down on my knees and bowed my head and said to God directly: 'I'm asking You to bring my son home. And I'm praying for him to find You so that he can be happy. In return, I also promise to seek to find You and get to know You and build my relationship with You.'

My prayer may sound manipulative, but it wasn't. In my heart, I really believed God would bring my son home and guide my son to Him. My promise to God was because I knew deep down that my prayer would be answered. It wasn't saying to God: 'If you give me this, I'm going to do that.' It was from a place of gratitude. I felt it would be answered because I had prayed directly to God. I was brought up as a Catholic, to start each prayer making the sign of the cross and saying: 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. But I suddenly felt I had to pray differently. I can't explain it. That voice was strong: 'Don't pray the way you normally do. Do it this way.' It was simple and direct to God. It felt like an instruction. There was no other way to do it.

This was my last hope of seeking a solution. There was no one else who could help. A month later, something told me to go and visit my son and I went without giving his father notice. I found he wasn't well. After I went home he text me that night to come and get him, and I was finally able to bring him home. On the first day he came back, he started to speak. His verbal communication just took on a whole new direction. He was very confident and inquisitive, asking me and other family members lots of questions. They found it so strange, as before they couldn't get a word out of him. That was a real blessing. Then, during the year after he returned home, my son started to look into Islam. He was open about his journey. I asked if

he was going to become Muslim. He said he wasn't sure. But then he came back within a week to say he had become Muslim.

I was fine with his news that he had converted, as I had seen huge changes in him. He was talking. He was smiling. He was engaged. I felt it was the right thing for him because I had asked God to allow him to find Him so he could be happy. And I could see he was happy. It just happened in a way that I didn't expect. It was not something I could have ever anticipated. After he returned home, my son began to ask me questions about my own beliefs and we spoke about Islam a lot. I didn't mind these conversations as I wanted to support him. But at the same time, I wasn't sure where he was taking me. He had begun to research classes that non-Muslims could attend where they could learn about Islam.

Then, one day he told me, 'I found somewhere and I think it would be good for you. Would you go?'

I told him, 'Let's leave it. You focus on yourself.'

But he persisted and said, 'I think it will be good for you.'

So my son took me there. And it was the beginning of a journey. It was a wonderful atmosphere. I felt I could be myself and that, as a Catholic, I had the same values as the other people there in terms of who God is. And that was very comforting. I felt like Islam was something I needed to explore more …

Marcia's story does not end there. I need to take over now. The day I was scheduled to deliver a class at that organisation, I had been really ill all week. On the day itself, despite waking up still feeling ill, there was something telling me that I should go. I got myself together, popped a paracetamol in my mouth and jumped on the Tube to Central London.

On that Tube journey, I made two du'a: 'Rabbi, I'm really not feeling well. Strengthen me and give me clarity of speech to deliver a lesson that will draw new Muslims closer to you and guide anyone interested in Islam to you.'

My second du'a was: 'Allah, I'm struggling to find a few more stories for my book. Guide me to people with really unique and powerful du'a stories.'

The whole time I was delivering my lesson that day, I felt a strong sense of connection with a woman who I could see was listening carefully. She

was a regular to the class, and after the lesson ended, the director pulled me aside and introduced me to her. I instantly felt a connection: I can't quite put my finger on it, but she seemed engaged and had such kind eyes.

It was Marcia. We began to talk, and she shared snippets of her background with me. She was Catholic and she mentioned how she had been brought to the organisation by her son, who was a fairly new Muslim. I stopped her and looked at her and said: 'I know this is going to sound strange, but I believe you are an answer to my prayers. I am writing a book and I prayed to God today that he would direct me to a powerful prayer story. Yours is definitely one of those. Would you mind if I take your number so I can interview you, please?'

We did the interview, and Marcia told me about the difference Islam had made to her son and their relationship. I was confident that her story would go into this book. Several months later, I was tidying up the chapter based on what she told me – this chapter – to send to my editor, and I messaged Marcia again, asking for a few final details.

One of my questions was: 'How is your relationship with God now?'

She replied, 'My relationship with God now … it's a journey. A constant journey. I feel very blessed to know that He is there guiding me. I am always looking for ways to build my relationship with Him. It's not easy, as there are things about being Muslim which challenge you. But I am working every day to be a better Muslim and trying to please God.'

I couldn't believe what I was reading.

'Marcia,' I asked, 'did you embrace Islam?'

'Yes,' she replied. 'I took my shahaadah on the first of July.'

Up until that moment, I'd had no idea Marcia had embraced Islam a week after we had met. Allah Hears and Responds to all du'a. And with the billions of lives He manages every day, He plans for souls to collide so that the du'a of two people who may have never met each other are answered perfectly through one another. Alhamdullillah.

On that day in Central London when I wasn't feeling well but knew that I should go to speak anyway, it was His Perfect Management that brought Marcia and me together.

Dear reader, you may be wondering why I chose to end my book with this chapter about the colliding of people's du'a. It is because you and I are part of a most intricate network. Your life is being managed by Allah ('azza

wa jal) whose Knowledge, Awareness and Attention can never be comprehended by the human mind. There are billions of creatures and human beings on Earth – and He looks after all of us. When you make du'a, it is a private moment between you and your Creator. Du'a changes qadr and the change in your own qadr (through the answers of Yes, Not Yet and No to your du'a) can often change the qadr of others within the intricate network we call life. I think of this like a chain of candles lighting each other.

Your very personal du'a changes your life, the life of those whom you know and quite possibly the lives of those you may never meet. Marcia's story touched me so deeply that I knew I had to end on it. The flame that kindled in Marcia's case was the light of faith. And who knows, as you read this chapter, perhaps this will trigger a light for you. Du'a is personal supplication that travels to the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth and when answered, sometimes answers the du'a of many others. This is the power of du'a.

Conclusion

Dearest reader, though this book is coming to an end, I hope you have internalised how very important it is to use du’a as your primary compass throughout the rest of your life’s journey. It is my hope that you will continue to work towards nurturing your heart before you make du’a, and on the refinement of what you say in your actual du’a, and on the trust and tawakkul you display as you await and live with Allah’s Response. We should all continue to work on this, because we are imperfect beings navigating an imperfect world.

I have something beautiful to share with you: Allah (‘azza wa jal), through His Love and Tender Mercy, has left us with the du’a of His Prophets and Messengers (may Allah be pleased with them) preserved in His Final Book to humankind as a guide to help us through …

In life, when you make mistakes, know that the Prophet Ādam (alayhis-salam) did too. And then, he made du’a:

> Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have Mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.
>
> Surah Al-Araf 3:23

When you are tested severely, know that the Prophet Ayyub (alayhis-salam) was tried too. And then, he made du’a:

> Indeed, adversity has touched me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.
>
> Surah Al-Anbiya 21:83

When you need or want something ardently, know that the Prophet Musa (alayhis-salam) did so too. And then, he made du’a:

> My Lord, indeed I am, for whatever good You would send down to me, in need.
>
> Surah Al-Qasas 28:83

When you are stuck and desperate, know that the Prophet Yunus (alayhis-salam) was too. And then, he made du’a:

> There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.
>
> Surah Al-Anbiya 21:87

When your hopes and dreams seem impossible, know that the Prophet Zakariya (alayhis-salam) felt his own dream was impossible too. And then, he made du’a:

> My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring. Indeed, You are the Hearer of supplication.
>
> Surah Ali-Imran 3:38

I want you – and the whole world – to know what du’a can be for you and bring to you, by Allah’s Mercy and Permission. As you continue on your journey through life, just as the Prophets (may peace be upon them) did – through ups and downs and your needs and wants, know this: there is power in du’a. Believe it. Use it. Hope in it. Live by and with it. And if and when you can, please remember me, my family and the ummah in your du’a too.

Glossary

Abaya:
Islamic dress

Adhaan:
Call to prayer

Adhkaar:
Morning and evening prayer and remembrance

Ahadith qudsi:
Allah's Words as shared by the Prophet (ﷺ)

Ajr:
Reward

Akhirah:
Eternal life

Alhamdulillah:
All praise and thanks are due to Allah

Allahu akbar:
Allah is Greater than everything

Allahumma barik:
May Allah bless

Amanah:
Upholding of trust

Ansar:
The supporters from Madinah who took the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers (the Muhajirun) into their homes

Arafah:

The second day of the Hajj pilgrimage

Asr:
Third prayer

Assalamu alaikum:
Peace be upon you

Awliya:
Allies of Allah

‘azza wa jal:
Glory be to Him

Barakah:
Blessings

Bismillah:
In the name of Allah

Dawah:
Calling people to Islam

Deen:
Way of life

Dhikr:
Remembrances of Allah

Dhulm:
Oppression

Du’a:
Personal supplication

Dunya:
Life of this world

Emaan:
Faith

Esha:
Final obligatory prayer of the day

Fajr:
Pre-dawn prayer

Fi sabilillah:
For the sake of Allah

Fitrah:
Natural inclination

Hadith:
Narration

Hadith qudsi:
Allah’s Words as narrated by the Prophet Muhammad

Hajj:
Mandatory pilgrimage to Makkah

Halaqa:
Islamic gathering

Hifdh:
Memorisation of the Qur’an

Hijrah:
Emigration to a Muslim country

Hijri:
Islamic calendar

Husn al khatimah:
A blessed ending

Ibadah:
Worship

Iddah:
Three-month window for marital reconciliation

Iftar:
Post-dusk meal

Ihraam:
sacred state into which a Muslim must enter in order to perform hajj (major pilgrimage) or the umrah (minor pilgrimage)

Ihsaan:
The state of worshipping Allah as though you see Him and though you cannot see Him, knowing He sees you

Insha'Allah:
God willing

Iqamah:
Second call to prayer

Istighfaar:
The act of seeking forgiveness from Allah

Istikharaa:
The prayer for seeking guidance

Jahiliyyah:
Life of ignorance before revelation

Janazah:
Funeral prayers

Jannah:
Paradise

Kabah:
The House of Allah in Makkah

Khair:
Goodness

Khalas:
Okay, enough, stop

Khidmah:
Service

Khushoo:
Focus in prayer

Khutbah:
Sermon

Labbayk Allahumma labbayk:
Here I am, O Allah, here I am

Laylatul Qadr:
The Night of Decree

Maghrib:
Dusk prayer

Mala’ika:
Angels

Marfoo:
Regarded as attributable to the Prophet

Masjid:
Mosque

Masjid an-Nabawi:
The Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad in Madinah

Mukhlaseen:
Sincere ones

Mustajaab:
Surely to be answered

Ni’mah:
Blessings

Qadr:

Divine Decree

Qira’aat:
Different recitations of the Qur’an

Qur’an:
Allah’s Holy Book

Rabbi:
My Lord

Raka’ah:
Unit of prayer

Ramadan:
The ninth month in the Islamic calendar, where fasting is prescribed

Rawdah:
The area between the tomb of the Prophet and his mimbar. It is a garden from the gardens of Paradise.

Revert:
One who has embraced Islam and reverted back to fitrah (natural inclination to worship Allah)

Rizq:
Provision

Sadaqa:
Charity

Salah:
Prayer

Salawaat:
Peace and blessings on the Prophet (ﷺ)

Seerah:
Life of the Prophet (ﷺ)

Shahaadah:

Declaration of faith

Shariah:
Islamic law

Shaytaan:
The devil

Shifaa:
Healing

Subhana'Allah:
How free of any imperfection is Allah

Subhanahu wa ta'ala:
Glorious and Most High is He

Sujood:
Prostration

Sunnah:
Tradition

Surah:
Chapter

Tahajjud:
Prayer at the last part of the night

Tawaf:
Circling the Kabah

Tawakkul:
Full reliance upon Allah

Tawbah:
The return to Allah through repentance

Ubudiyyah:
Servitude

Ummah:

Islamic community

Umrah:
Non-obligatory pilgrimage

Wudu:
Ablution before prayer

Yaqeen:
Certainty

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Gratitude

When I finished writing my first book, I fully envisioned writing another – not because of myself, but rather because of my Lord's Ability. I choose to perceive Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala) as One who Hears, Responds and Generously gives more. All we need to do is ask. And so I knew, so long as it was good for me, Allah would bless me to write again. By His Permission, He 'azza wa jal did, and truly, I am humbled by this opportunity. I am grateful to Him for granting me all that I needed to write this book.

Words can never portray how I feel about this ni'mah (blessing). My hope and du'a is that my Rabb accepts this book as a good deed done for His Sake and that He forgives me for any shortcomings therein.

After thanking the One who provides the people, resources and channels to facilitate goals and dreams, I must now thank a number of special individuals. As the Prophet (ﷺ) said: 'Whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah.'

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I end by thanking Allah again and I can never tire of thanking Him. He Hears. He Responds. He Gives and Withholds in ways that are exquisitely beautiful. My Lord, my du'a as I write these last words is: Ya Rabbi, accept this from me. Without Your acceptance, it is nothing. Accept this for Your Sake. My living, my writing and my dying is only for You.



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