**Thankfulness (Shukr)**



So always remember and make mention of Me (when service to Me is due), that I may remember and make mention of you (when judgment and recompense are due); and give thanks to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me.**118 [[1]](#endnote-2)**

***118****. Thankfulness or gratitude is the door to faith, and ingratitude is the way to unbelief. The Qur'ān uses the same word – kufr – for both unbelief and ingratitude. Kufr (unbelief) literally means overlaying or concealing, and as a term, it means concealing and rejecting, or denying, any of the pillars of faith and the established religious commandments. Denying God, or not recognizing Him with His essential Attributes, such as His being the Creator, the Provider, the absolute Ruler and Governor of the universe, the Sustainer, and the Self-Subsisting One, etc., is primarily included in kufr . Those who do not recognize God, with His Attributes, will attribute anything good or praiseworthy in their lives to themselves, instead of attributing it to God. Such an attitude is obviously identical with ingratitude.*



Indeed, We have established you on the earth (O humankind, endowed you with great potential) and arranged for your livelihood in it. Scarcely do you give thanks!1[[2]](#endnote-3)

*1. When we look about the earth and at the universe from the earth, we can easily see what great bounties humankind have been endowed with. The earth has been prepared for humankind, and we have been endowed with what is necessary to live on the earth, being equipped in a way that will satisfy both our material needs and all our outer and inner senses. Furthermore, not only the earth, but the heavens with the sun, the moon, and the stars are at the service of the earth and humankind, even though the earth is no bigger than a dot when compared to the heavens. Humans have an innate tendency to thank anyone who does them some good, so how ungrateful it would be not to give thanks to God Who has spread before us the earth like a table and made the universe a palace in which we can reside. Giving thanks to God is based on acknowledging that whatever humankind has, and whatever we acquire in our earthly life, is from God, and to follow the way He has established for us. Thankfulness, which we can say consists largely of belief and worship in all its forms, is a duty to be performed not for the sake of a future reward, but in return for the bounties already granted. That is, belief and worship are not a cause for God to give further rewards to humankind, like eternal bliss in Paradise; rather, they are a duty required by the bounties which have already been granted. Eternal bliss in Paradise is only given out of God's grace and mercy. For this reason, the Qur'ān expresses the attitude of those who have entered Paradise as being, All praise and gratitude are for God, the Lord of the worlds ! (39: 75); this is felt in their hearts and emerges as speech from their mouths.*

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The Prophet (ﷺ) used to stand (in the prayer) or pray till both his feet or legs swelled. He was asked why (he offered such an unbearable prayer) and he said, "should I not be a thankful slave."[[3]](#endnote-4)

"The one who eats and is grateful is like the status of the patient fasting person."[[4]](#endnote-5)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: He who does not thank Allah does not thank people.[[5]](#endnote-6)

It is reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that there was (once) a downpour during the life of the Apostle (may peace and blessings be upon him Upon this the Apostle (may peace and blessings be upon him) observed:

Some people entered the morning with gratitude and some with ingratitude (to Allah). Those who entered with gratitude said: This is the blessing of Allah, and those who entered with ingratitude said: Such and such asterism was right. It was upon this that the verse was revealed: I swear by the setting of the stars to the end and make your provision that you should disbelieve it.[[6]](#endnote-7)

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**Shukr (Thankfulness)[[7]](#endnote-8)**

Literally meaning gladness felt about and gratitude shown for the good done to one, Sufis use shukr to mean using one's body, abilities, feelings, and thoughts bestowed upon one to fulfill the purpose of his or her creation: being thankful to the Creator for what He has bestowed. Such thankfulness is to be reflected in the person's actions or daily life, in speech and in the heart, by admitting that all things are directly from Him, and by feeling gratitude for them.

One may thank God verbally by only depending upon His power and strength, as well as upon His bestowal or withholding of favors, and acknowledging that all good and bounties come from Him. As He alone creates all good, beauty, and bounty, as well as the means by which they can be obtained, only He sends them at the appropriate time.

Since He alone determines, apportions, creates, and spreads [all our provisions] before us as "heavenly tables," He alone deserves our gratitude and thanks. Attributing our attainment of His bounties to our own or to another's means or causes, in effect thereby proclaiming that He is not the true Owner, Creator, and Giver of all bounty, is like giving a huge tip to the servant who lays before us a magnificent table and ignoring the host who is responsible for having it prepared and sent to us. Such an attitude reflects sheer ignorance and ingratitude, as mentioned in: They know only the outward face of the life of the world (apparent to them), and they are completely unaware of (its face looking to) the Hereafter (30:7).

True thankfulness in one's heart is manifested through the conviction and acknowledgment that all bounties are from God, and then ordering one's life accordingly. One can thank God verbally and through one's daily life only if personally convinced, and if one willingly acknowledges that his or her existence, life, body, physical appearance, and all abilities and accomplishments are from God, as are all of the bounties obtained and consumed. This is stated in: Do you not see that God has made serviceable unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth, and has loaded you with His bounties seen or unseen? (31:20), and: He gives you of all that you ask Him; and if you reckon the bounties of God, you can never count them (14:34).

Bodily thankfulness is possible by using one's organs, faculties, and abilities for the purposes for which they were created, and in performing the duties of servanthood falling on each. On the other hand, some have stated that verbal thankfulness means daily recitation of portions of the Qur'an, prayers, supplications, and God's Names. Thankfulness by the heart means that one is certain or convinced of the truth of the Islamic faith and straightforwardness. Practical or bodily thankfulness, according to others, means observing all acts of worship. Since thankfulness relates directly to all aspects or branches of belief and worship, it is regarded as half of the faith. With respect to this inclusiveness, it is considered together with patience, meaning that according to some people, thankfulness and patience are considered as the two halves of religious life.

In His eternal Speech, God Almighty repeatedly commands thankfulness and, as in the phrases so that you may give thanks (2:52) and God will reward the thankful (3:144), presents it as the purpose of creation and of sending religion. In such verses as: If you are thankful I will add more unto you. But if you show ingratitude My punishment is terrible indeed (14:7), He has promised abundant reward to the thankful and threatened the ungrateful with a terrible punishment. One of His own Names is the All-Thanking, which shows us that the way to obtain all bounties or favors is through thankfulness, which He returns with abundant reward. He exalts the Prophets Abraham and Noah, upon them be peace, saying: (Abraham was) thankful for His bounties (16:121) and Assuredly, he (Noah) was a grateful servant (17:3).

Although thankfulness is a religious act of great importance and significant "capital," few people truly do it: Few of My servants are thankful (34:13). Very few people live in full awareness of the duty of thankfulness, saying: Shall I not be a servant grateful (to my Lord)?, and try their best to perform their duty of thankfulness and order their lives accordingly.

The glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, whose soles swelled because of his long supererogatory prayer vigils (tahajjud), was a matchless hero of thankfulness. On one occasion, he told his wife 'A'isha: Shall I not be a servant grateful to God? He always thanked God and recommended thankfulness to his followers, and prayed to God every morning and evening, saying: O God. Help me mention You, thank You, and worship You in the best way possible.114

Thankfulness is the deep gratitude and devotion of one who, receiving His bounties or favors, directs these feelings toward the One Who bestows such blessing, and the subsequent turning to Him in love, appreciation, and acknowledgment. The above Prophetic saying expresses this most directly.

People are thankful for many things: the provisions, home, and family with which they have been favored; wealth and health; belief, knowledge of God, and the spiritual pleasures bestowed on them; and the consciousness with which God favored them so they could open themselves to the knowledge that they must be thankful. If those who are thankful for such a consciousness use their helplessness and destitution as "capital" and thank Him continuously, they will be among the truly thankful. It is narrated from God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, that

The Prophet David, upon him be peace, asked God Almighty: O Lord. How can I be thankful to You, since thanking You is another favor that requires thankfulness? The Almighty responded: Just now you have done it.

I think this is what is expressed in: We have not been able to thank You as thanking You requires, O All-Thanked One.

One can be thankful by recognizing and appreciating Divine favors, for feeling gratitude to the One Who bestows favors depends to a great extent on due recognition and appreciation of them. Belief and Islam (including the Qur'an) lead one to recognize and appreciate favors and thus turn to God in gratitude. One can be more aware of these favors, and that they are given to us by God out of His mercy for our helplessness and inability to meet our own needs, in the light of belief and Islamic practices. This awareness urges us to praise the One Who bestows upon us those favors and bounties that we consume. Awakening to the meaning of: As for the favor of Your Lord, proclaim it (93:11), we feel a deep need to be grateful and thankful.

Everyone is naturally inclined to praise the good and the one who does good to him or her. However, until this feeling is aroused there is no awareness of being favored by someone else, just as fish are not conscious of living in water. Furthermore, these favors may be attributed to the means and causes used to obtain them. If it is blindness and deafness not to see and appreciate the favors we continuously receive, then it must be an unforgivable deviation to attribute them to various blind, deaf, and unfeeling means and causes. The Prophetic statements: One who does not thank for the little does not thank for the abundant, and: One who does not thank people does not thank God, express blindness and deafness to favors and remind us of the importance of being thankful. Such verses as: Mention Me so that I will mention you, and give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me (2:152), and: Worship Him and give Him thanks (29:17) tell us that it is God Who truly deserves to be thanked, and also remind us of His absolute Unity.

Thankfulness can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of thankfulness for those things that everyone, regardless of religion or spiritual attainment, desires. The second category consists of thankfulness for those things that, although apparently disagreeable or displeasing, reveal their true nature to those who can see them as favors requiring gratitude.

The third category of thankfulness is that kind performed by those who are loved by God and view favors or bounties from the perspective of the One Who bestows them. They spend their lives in spiritual pleasure that begins in observing God's manifestation of Himself through His favors, and take the greatest pleasure in worshipping Him. Although they are always enraptured with the spiritual delight flowing from their love of Him, they are extremely careful of their relationship with Him. Such people constantly strive to preserve the Divine blessings that have been bestowed upon them, and always search for what they have missed. While they constantly deepen their belief, love, and gratitude along the way toward Him, the "nets of their sight" are filled with different blessings and gifts.

O God! Include us among Your servants whom You love, have made sincere, and have brought unto You. Grant peace and blessings to our Master, the Master of those loved, made sincere, and brought near unto You. May 1994, Vol 16, Issue 184

1. **2:152/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal** [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. **7:10/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal** [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. **Sahih al-Bukhari 1130** [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. **Tirmidhi, Vol. 4, Book 11, Hadith 2486** [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. **SunanAbiDawud 4811** [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. **Sahih Muslim 73** [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. **SUFISM VOL.1 by FETHULLAH GULEN** [↑](#endnote-ref-8)