



TALK TOOLKIT — Delivering Lectures with Purpose

In Hardship and In Ease: How to Rely on God

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INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

TALK TOOLKIT

How to rely on God

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy.

The Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr ؓ hid together in a cave. Outside, death circled nearer and nearer in the blades and hateful hearts of the disbelievers of Quraysh.

The Prophet ﷺ and his beloved companion had done everything they could to avoid their persecutors. They had left Mecca at an unpredictable time, taken an alternate route to Medina and accepted the help of a guide. They had even left Ali ؓ, the cousin of the Prophet, as a decoy in the Prophet's bed ؓ. Yet the disbelievers were still close on their heels. Abu Bakr ؓ voiced his concerns for their safety, but the Prophet ﷺ consoled him: "Do not grieve, indeed Allah is with us." And in that moment, "Allah sent down his tranquillity upon him and supported him with angels you did not see" [Qur'an 9:40].

And of course, Allah was with them. By Allah's Will the disbelievers passed by the mouth of the cave without noticing them. The Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr ؓ trusted in Allah their entire journey and did everything within their power to travel safely. But when faced with an impossible situation, with danger right on their tails, the Prophet ﷺ relied entirely on Allah alone.

So how do we have the same trust in Allah that the Prophet ﷺ had? How do we accept what seems beyond our comprehension and control? How do we overcome our natural anxieties and find purpose and solace?

Allah has promised that with every hardship we face, there is ease. Allah does not send us trials without also giving us the means to seek relief and make our success easy. The real test of hardship is not the worldly pain and discomfort, but how we choose to respond to it.

Tawakkul

Reliance on Allah, or *tawakkul*, is among the greatest acts of worship and one not simply recommended, but required of us: "...and upon Allah rely, if you should be believers" (5:23). It is a means to His pleasure and reward. It is among the greatest blessings we have that enables us to nurture and maintain our faith. It is the source that inspires hope, contentment with divine decree, and confidence at all times and in all situations, particularly during moments of fear and uncertainty. Allah makes the following promise in the Qur'an:

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ



He will provide for the believer from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah, then He is sufficient for him. [65:3]

Tawakkul lives in the heart of the believer and provides the lens through which we should see the world. Allah commands us, “And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]” [3:159]. It is human to struggle, to doubt, to complain, and to even become consumed with fear at times. *Tawakkul* is the means by which we right our course and stay on it. The benefits of *tawakkul* are many, among them that you hand over to Allah that which burdens your heart and mind.

However, when our inner voice begins to whine and Shaytan’s whispers get to us, we may accidentally fall into placing our emotions, logic, and tangible actions ahead of our reliance on Allah and on what that is often beyond our ability to perceive. ***Tawakkul is a leap of faith into that very unknown.*** That trust hinges on two key questions: first, how well do we know Allah? Second, what kind of relationship do we have with Him?

Knowing Allah

One of the ways we can know Allah is by reflecting over and studying His names and attributes. When we call upon Al-Ḥayy (the Eternal), Al-Qayyūm (the Sustainer of all that exists), Al-‘Alīm (the one whose knowledge is all encompassing), Al-Qādir (the Most Powerful), Al-Razzāq (the One who provides abundantly), Al-Ghanī (the Self-Sufficient), we cannot help but sense the control Allah has over anything and everything. The greater our awareness of Allah, the greater our certainty and our love for Him is, and the stronger our *tawakkul* is.

Remembering that Allah has complete and total power over us helps us believe that it is also always within His power to provide for us. In a hadith *qudsi*, Allah says:

يَا عِبَادِي! لَوْ أَنَّ أَوَّلَكُمْ وَآخِرَكُمْ وَأَنْسَكُمْ وَجَنَّتُمْ فَأَمُّوا فِي صَعِيدٍ وَاحِدٍ، فَسَأَلُونِي، فَأَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مَسْأَلَتَهُ، مَا نَقَصَ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا عِنْدِي إِلَّا كَمَا يَنْقُصُ الْمَخِيطُ إِذَا أُدْخِلَ الْبَحْرَ

O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all to stand together in one place and ask of Me, and I were to give everyone what they requested, then that would not decrease from what I Possess, except as much as is decreased from the ocean when a needle is dipped into it.

Allah is never decreased nor incapable of giving us—all we have to do is ask.

Just as supplication (*du’a*) is a means to the desired outcome, so is *tawakkul*. Allah answers the call of those who place their trust in Him. He repeatedly commands us in the Qur’an to place our trust and reliance in Him. *Tawakkul* is an act of submission to the Master. By relying only on Him, we build the foundation and perfect our belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tawhīd*).

Relationship with Allah

Scholars divide people into three categories in terms of their approach to *tawakkul*. The first type of person is one who relies wholly on Allah, without personally asserting any effort toward the end goal himself. The term used to describe this concept is *tawākul* (pronounced: *ta-waa-kul*). This is contradictory to *tawakkul* (pronounced *ta-wak-kul*) as understood in the Qur'an and Sunnah. This is like a person who claims to trust Allah to protect them from harm, while they themselves refrain from taking necessary actions to protect themselves like wearing a seatbelt.

The second type of person takes the means to achieve the desired outcome, while relying solely on those means, and not on Allah. This is likened to one who seeks the recommended or necessary medical treatment for an ailment. However, they place their trust solely on the means—the medicine and the doctor—but does not acknowledge Allah as the One who ultimately provides the cure through those very means.

The third group of people are those who take the necessary steps to achieve the desired outcome and place their trust in Allah to grant them success. This is the correct understanding of *tawakkul* as taught and practiced by the Prophet ﷺ and every prophet before him. During any time of uncertainty and fear, the people of *tawakkul* are those who remain steadfast in their hope in Allah to bring them through the test, while they use every permissible means to achieve that end. This is like a student who studies for a test and also makes sincere *du'a* that Allah will grant them a passing grade. They put in the work, but know that the result lies ultimately with Allah, and whatever He wills shall be.

Lessons from the Qur'an and Sunnah

The Qur'an and Sunnah are filled with valuable lessons about *tawakkul*, illustrating how our greatest role models implemented it in their lives. Ibrahim ؑ found coolness and tranquility in the middle of the fire when he placed his trust in Allah, reciting the words, "Allah (Alone) is sufficient for us and He is the Best Disposer of affairs." These were the same words uttered by Muhammad ﷺ when he and his Companions were informed of a great army gathering against them at Uhud. He ﷺ made sure to take the necessary means available by planning strategically and donning armor, while turning to Allah in *du'a* to seek the ultimate help and protection.

Think of the certainty of Musa ؑ when the Pharaoh and his powerful armies were closing in on him and his people. The children of Israel despaired—understandably, with the Pharaoh behind them and the water in front of them!—but Musa ؑ only replied, "Nay, surely! With me is my Lord, He will guide me." (26:62)

As difficult as it is to imagine, the mother of Musa ؑ was divinely inspired to place her infant in a river in order to save his life. How amazing is His wisdom that Allah then kept Musa ؑ safe, raising him in the home of the very same tyrant from whom she was desperate to secure his escape. Even if we don't fully comprehend the extent of the adversity these exemplary believers overcame with *tawakkul*, they provide consolation and hope to us all. To those among us who find themselves in the midst of a storm, whether it's calamity, injustice, loss of life or provision, place your trust in Allah and stay the course with hope and confidence to weather the storm, and know that Allah is with you too.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَوَكَّلُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَقَّ تَوَكُّلِهِ لَرُزِقْتُمْ كَمَا يُرْزَقُ الطَّيْرُ تَغْدُو خِمَاصًا وَتَرُوحُ بِطَانًا

If you all depend on Allah with due reliance, He would certainly give you provision as He gives it to birds who go forth hungry in the morning and return with [a] full belly at dusk.

[Tirmidhi]

This hadith teaches us that *tawakkul* begins with the heart's firm reliance on Allah. Strengthened with *tawakkul*, the believer sets forth on the path to attain his or her goal, be it safety, sustenance, knowledge, etc. You may not know where that path will take you, nor have the knowledge of how or when you will reach your goal, but your reliance on Allah keeps you steadfast with the certainty that Allah will provide, just as He does for the birds. **None who seek from Him are returned empty-handed.**

Tawakkul involves the coming together of both one's spiritual and material means. It begins in the heart and manifests in action. Trust that your provision is guaranteed, but you may have to struggle and strive for it.

Taking the means

So what can we do to nurture our *tawakkul* on a daily basis? Here are a few reminders we can hold onto.

First, let's take a look at *du'a*. *Du'a* (supplication) is in and of itself a form of worship, and it allows us to admit our deficiencies and inabilities to ourselves while asking the One who has no deficiencies or inabilities for His help. In a hadith the Prophet ﷺ said:

سَلْ تُعْطَهُ ، سَلْ تُعْطَهُ

Ask; your request will be granted, ask; your request will be granted. [Tirmidhi]

So long as we are not impatient, and we continue to trust that Allah will answer our prayers with that which we asked for or with that which is better, our requests will be granted. Internalize your *du'a* the way you may have internalized your anxiety and fear, and trust that

Allah will turn your *du'a* into a means of relief and comfort. *Du'a* is the weapon of the believer, so wield your weapon with confidence.

Secondly, keep a firm resolve. *Tawakkul* closes the door to doubts, inaction, stress, and dissatisfaction with oneself and others. Drop the baggage that slows you down and busy yourself with good deeds to avoid wasting time and experiencing regret. Remember that *tawakkul* has two steps: reliance in the heart and seeking the available means.

Other actions to take: make sincere *istighfar* and trust that Allah will forgive you. Be mindful of your prayers. Allah gives us the opportunity to unburden our hearts and minds at least five times a day. Remember that Allah will never burden you with more than you can handle. Believe in the unseen—Allah in His infinite wisdom and knowledge is steering us to good even if we cannot see or understand the course. Exercise patience in situations of prosperity and adversity. Stay optimistic, as pessimism is contradictory to *tawakkul*. Allah has said in a hadith *qudsi*: “I am to my slave as he thinks of me,” meaning God does for you what you think He can. So have a good opinion of Allah, and remember that having a high opinion of Allah is actually just the correct opinion of Him. Develop a daily regimen of *dhikr*. There are prescribed *du'as* we can make everyday and we should also generally get in the habit of keeping our tongues moist with the remembrance of Allah.

Lastly, remember that Allah loves you. At times, we mistakenly interpret a test from Allah as an indication that He does not love us, or that we have been abandoned. Tests come to all people, in all stations of life, whether by way of prosperity or adversity, and regardless of one's level of faith. Every test is designed to bring us closer to Allah because He loves His servants and wants the best outcome for us. *Tawakkul* involves using these tests to seek Allah and to be closer to Him. **Realize that you are not broken, abandoned, or forgotten, but that Allah has actually given you exactly what you need.**

Conclusion

To conclude, let us reflect once more on the verses in Surat al-Talaq:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا * وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ ۚ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out, and will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah, then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has set a measure for all things. [65:2-3]

No doubt humanity is experiencing great turbulence today. We pray for the help of Allah to come soon with relief for all those affected. As difficult as it is to balance staying informed of the current state of affairs and staying productive in trying times, when the news cycle is



perpetual and distressful, *tawakkul* in Allah is the greatest of gifts. May Allah grant us the resolve to stay the course until we reach our ultimate destination.