THE CONSTANT REQUEST:
SEEKING GUIDANCE THROUGH THE QURAN

AN EBOOK BASED ON THE WEBINAR BY SHAYKH AHMAD ALKURDY

CONNECTING WITH THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE QURAN

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=my_Sgf2i3ng

Quranic Studies Webinar Series

INTRODUCTION

Bismillah. Alhamdulillah. We begin with the name of Allah, God Almighty, asking for His help, His blessings, and His protection. All praise, glory, and thanks belong exclusively to Allah, God Almighty, for He is the Lord of everything in existence. We ask God Almighty to bless and honor His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, to elevate his mention and rank, and shower him with protection and grace.

Our topic is the opening chapter of the Quran. It is the very first chapter you encounter when opening the Quran in book form, and it is intrinsically connected to our prescribed daily ritual devotion, Salah. We will explore how it serves as our primary gateway for seeking Divine Guidance.

DISTINGUISHING SALAH, DUA, AND THIKR

Salah includes prayers and supplications, but it represents the formal prescribed act of worship in Islam. One of the classic names of the opening chapter itself is As-Salah ("The Prayer"). It carries this title because reciting it is an essential requirement of formal ritual worship.

When someone comes to Islam as a new Muslim, among the first practical steps they learn are physical purification, ritual washing, and the performance of Salah. Even before learning extensive supplications, the first words every new Muslim is encouraged to learn and memorize is the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1. In every single unit of standing during Salah, reciting the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 is mandatory.

The Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 is called a prayer because it centers upon a direct petitionary request.

To appreciate this, we can distinguish between three core categories of prayer in Islam:

- **1. The Formal Prayer (Salah):** The structured physical postures—standing, bowing, and kneeling—accompanied by Quranic recitation, praises of God and supplications.
- **2. The Petitionary Prayer (Dua):** Personal requests, petitions, and supplications addressed to God.
- **3. Mentioning God (Thikr):** Statements of praise, exaltation, and mentioning God.

What makes the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 extraordinary is that it seamlessly incorporates all three dimensions. As we perform the physical postures of Salah, we must recite the Opening Chapter of the Quran, which includes praising and glorifying Allah (Thikr), and culminates with our highest petitionary request for Divine Guidance (Dua).

3. THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE QURAN #1 - A CONVERSATION WITH GOD

For new Muslims learning Salah in Arabic, one often becomes so focused on correct pronunciation and memorization that the deeper meaning of the experience is lost. The Messenger Muhammad ﷺ taught us that when we recite the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 with mindfulness, we enter into a direct dialogue with Allah. God has divided Salah into two halves. One for Himself and one for the devoted servant praying. This results in the praying servant receiving what he is seeking and asking for.

The Divine Dialogue

Allah describes how He responds to the reciter line by line:

- When the servant says: "All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the creation," Allah says: "My servant has praised Me."
- When the servant says: "The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful," Allah says: "My servant has complemented Me."
- When the servant says: "Master of the Day of Recompense," Allah says: "My servant has glorified Me, entrusting Me."
- When the servant says: "You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help," Allah says: "This is between Me and My servant in two halves, and My servant shall have what he asked for."
- When the servant says: "Guide us to the Straight Path—the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have earned anger, nor of those who are astray," Allah says: "These are for My servant, and My servant shall have what he requested."

Recognizing that this exchange occurs every time we perform the prescribed ritual devotion transforms our recitation from a mechanical exercise into a living, personal dialogue with God. Notice also the profound Islamic etiquette embedded in this structure: before asking for anything, we begin by praising, exalting, and thanking God. Only after affirming our exclusive devotion and reliance upon Him do we present our request.

4. THE CORE REQUEST: GUIDANCE AS SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL

What is the essential petition at the heart of the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1? What is the primary request we present to God?

Physically, human life depends upon oxygen, water, and nutrition to sustain the body. Just as these physical elements fuel our physical bodies, our spiritual survival and nourishment depend entirely upon Divine Guidance. Guidance from God is the one resource of which we can never have too much.

Every physical resource can be overconsumed—excessive water or oxygen intake can cause physiological harm. Diving Guidance, however, is unique: you can never overdose on guidance. It is an absolute necessity for every second of our existence. While you may only seek water when thirsty, spiritual guidance is something we cannot survive without for even a single moment.

We repeat this request a minimum of seventeen times every day, corresponding to the seventeen units across the five daily prescribed ritual devotions. Repeating this prayer continuously is not redundant or mindless. Contrary to what some may think,repetition reflects our ongoing dependence on God, our humility before Him and unlocks deeper layers of spiritual meaning as we grow in faith.

5. UNPACKING "GUIDE US TO THE STRAIGHT PATH"

When we recite "Guide us to the Straight Path," our petition encompasses three essential pillars:

- **1. To Teach Us (Show Us the Way):** We pray for Divine Instruction, beneficial knowledge, and clear direction.
- **2. To Enable Us (Help Us Apply the Knowledge):** Knowledge alone does not guarantee reaching a destination. We require Divine Assistance, strength, and resources to apply what we have learned to reach the destination.
- **3. To Keep Us Firm (Steadfastness):** Spiritual growth is a lifelong endeavor, not a temporary phase. We ask God to keep us consistent and steadfast until we reach and enter Paradise.

In Islam, the primary purpose of learning is practical application—not the mere accumulation of information, data, academic knowledge or degrees. Unapplied knowledge becomes evidence against a person rather than a source of benefit.

The Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 highlights two contrasting deviations from the Straight Path:

- **Those who earned anger:** Individuals who possessed clear knowledge and awareness of scripture but arrogantly refused to apply it and rebelled against God.
- **Those who are astray:** Wishful thinkers who attempted to navigate life based on speculation and emotion without following clear Divine Guidance.

The path of the true believer, in contrast with the deviations that we are to seek protection from, integrates both sound knowledge and active, sincere application, maintained with humility before God.

6. THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF SEEKING GUIDANCE

Scholars of Islam explain that when we petition Allah for guidance in the Opening Chapter of the Quran #1, we are asking for six distinct dimensions of spiritual guidance:

1. FIRMNESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

We ask Allah to keep us steadfast upon the truth. The Messenger Muhammad ﷺ frequently supplicated: "O Turner of the hearts, keep my heart firm upon Your religion." Human hearts are inherently vulnerable to change and distraction, so we should continually ask for consistency.

2. INCREASE IN GUIDANCE

Guidance is an expanding trajectory. As we put into practice the guidance we currently have, Allah opens deeper levels of understanding and spiritual light. Worship, reflection, and growth should continue throughout our lives until our final breath.

3. GUIDANCE TO TRUTH AMID DISAGREEMENT

When human opinions clash and complex issues arise, intellect alone cannot guarantee arriving at the truth. We ask Allah for Divine Correctness . The Messenger ﷺ prayed during the night vigil: "O Allah, Lord of Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael... guide me by Your permission to the truth regarding that wherein people differ."

4. GUIDANCE TO THE DUTY OF THE MOMENT

Every situation carries a specific devotional priority—whether performing the prescribed prayer on time, honoring and responding to our parents, aiding someone in distress, or exercising perseverance during trials and afflictions. We ask to be guided to fulfill whatever devotion Allah expects from us in each specific circumstance.

5. PROGRESSION FROM GOOD TO BETTER

Rather than remaining complacent with a baseline of good deeds, we ask for the vision and discipline to advance toward higher spiritual excellence, striving to fulfill God's commands in the most appropriate manner.

6. DIVINE DISCERNMENT AND INSIGHT

We pray for spiritual foresight—the gift from God to recognize truth, subtleties, and constructive paths that may remain hidden to others.

7. THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE & SUMMARY OF THE QURAN

Why do we perpetually seek renewed guidance throughout life? As we age and accumulate life experience, our understanding of Divine truth matures. Experience, self-reflection, and learning from past mistakes grant us insights that abstract knowledge alone cannot convey.

The Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 is known by the title "The Healer," serving as a means of spiritual, mental, and physical restoration.

The overarching message of the entire Quran is summarized within this opening chapter. It establishes:

- **Who God is:** The Lord, Sustainer, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, King and Master of Judgment.
- **Who we are:** Devoted servants exclusively worshiping and obeying Him while exclusively relying upon God for support.
- **The paths of humanity:** Those who earn Divine Favor through applied truth, contrasted with those who reject guidance or wander without knowledge.

8. CONCLUSION: CONNECTING WITH THE QURAN THROUGH APPLIED GUIDANCE

The Opening Chapter of the Quran #1 serves as the comprehensive foundation of a believer's relationship with Allah. Although it is a brief chapter, it encompasses the overarching message of the entire Quran—defining who God is, who we are as His servants, and the distinct paths available to humanity.

The lesson to take away is that that true connection with the Quran cannot be achieved through mechanical recitation or memorization alone. The individuals who derive the greatest benefit from the Quran are those who strive to understand its profound meanings and actively apply its guidance in their daily lives.

Ultimately, seeking guidance is a lifelong project—a marathon requiring preparation, continuous learning, active practice, and steadfast humility before Allah. By recognizing that every Salah is an interactive conversation with our Creator, believers are empowered to transform routine acts into a living, personal journey of spiritual growth and devotion.

We ask Allah to teach us what benefits us, allow us to benefit from what He has taught us, and increase us in beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds. May Allah keep us firm, constant, and steadfast upon guidance, grant us physical and spiritual healing, and protect us always.