

## Why we worship God



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## Icon key

### Stage one:



#### Essential questions:

The most important questions that the students should be able to answer by the end of the lesson.



#### Key vocabulary:

These are the primary technical terms in the unit without which the student will not understand the lesson.

### Stage two:



#### Teacher takeaway:

This is the primary takeaway we want students to leave the lesson with. It usually outlines the learning process that describes how the different parts and sections of the lesson plan help students arrive at the learning objectives.



#### Teacher's note:

This is an undefined body of text that ranges between notes on instructions or a heads up on potential problems you may encounter while teaching.



#### Ayat:

Qur'anic verse



#### Hadith:

Hadith narration

### Stage three:

#### Formative assessments:

Low-stake assessments used to monitor student learning during instruction in order to provide ongoing feedback and adjust teaching to improve student understanding.

#### Summative assessments:

Assessments that evaluate student learning and skill acquisition at the end of a lesson or unit to determine student understanding and application of the lesson objectives.



Unit overview and objectives

# **Unit overview**

# **Learning objectives**

# **Content standards**

### **Unit overview**

When we think of our obligation as Muslims to worship God, some of us may express confusion at the idea that God “needs” or “wants” us to worship Him. As humans, we may even have a tendency to perceive God as needy or narcissistic because of His request to be worshiped. However, insisting that God is egotistically driven to demand devotional service is neither common sense nor sound logic—rather, it results from a faulty image of God. Islamic theology steers clear of connecting human qualities and motivations to God. Instead, Islam provides a grounded and honest answer to the question “Why does God ask to be worshiped?”

In this unit, we respond to this inquiry by first recognizing the limitations of our human knowledge with respect to God’s absolute and all-encompassing knowledge. Due to these limitations, we can never truly understand and recognize God’s motives or wisdom. He has the unquestionable right to place demands upon us as His creation. One may hence wonder whether we even need to explore reasons to worship God. Certainly, it makes little sense to seek a reason for every act or demand of God. A variety of Muslim scholars nonetheless searched for legal reasons and reflected on practical wisdoms behind many of God’s commands. They sought explanations—not to question God’s laws, but to have a better appreciation of His rulings.

God’s right to demand us to worship, for example, could have conceivably been issued out of a desire to inflict hardship or cruelty. Yet, through revelation we come to understand some of the wisdom behind worship in a way that allows us to appreciate its role in our lives and the benefits it provides. Gaining a true understanding of who God is increases us in gratitude. As a result, we should feel compelled to worship God, our Creator and Nourisher. He maintains the most intricate bodily processes that occur every second of our lives to sustain our existence. And He constantly showers us with His blessings and answers our prayers making Him most worthy of worship.

Once we recognize that God is entitled to our submission and worship, then it follows that His individual commands are not in need of particular justifications. Whether or not we understand the justifications, we are still bound to abide by God’s commandments by virtue of acknowledging their divine origin. But through this process of exploration, we can satisfy our intrinsic curiosity and the need to make sense of our existence. Ultimately, we can recognize that in exercising His prerogative, God’s demands on us—including the demand to be worshiped—issue from compassion and a regard of well-being for us as His creation. In worshiping Him, we find endless benefit and a sense of fulfillment. Worshiping God, therefore, is the most meaningful of pursuits.

#### **Multimedia usage**

Our units occasionally use multimedia resources that are produced by parties external to Yaqeen. When referencing these resources, we offer a specific timestamp for your class to view. Please note that we only endorse the use of the timestamped portion and do not stand by other aspects of the video. We encourage teachers to always refer to the lesson plan document when using the presentation to ensure that only time-stamped portions of the videos are shown in class.

### **Learning objectives**

Toward the completion of this unit, students should be able to:

#### **Lesson plan 1**

- ① Acknowledge their inability to comprehend the nature of their Creator given human limitations. (*cognitive and affective*)
- ② Investigate the human biases implied in the question, “why does God ask us to worship Him?” (*cognitive*)

#### **Lesson plan 2**

- ① Understand that we are obligated to worship God due to our indebtedness to Him. (*cognitive*)
- ② Appreciate and recognize God’s constant presence and involvement in our lives. (*affective & cognitive*)
- ③ (Optional): Understand the meaning of worship as it relates to the mind, body, and heart. (*cognitive*)

#### **Lesson plan 3**

- ① Analyze the many benefits of worship and submitting oneself to God (through rituals and non-rituals). (*cognitive*)
- ② Appreciate that while God has the power to do whatever He wants, His commands reflect His compassionate regard for the well-being and benefit of His servants. (*affective*)

### **Content standards**

#### **SS.SOC.3.9-12**

Hypothesize how primary agents of socialization influence the individual.

#### **SS.IS.1.9-12**

Address essential questions that reflect an enduring issue in the field.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A**

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C**

Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

#### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9**

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



Instructions and activities

# ***Lesson 1 • Human limitations and biases***

## **Lesson 2**

## **Lesson 3**



## Essential questions

How does reflecting on human nature and the natural world instill humility and awe toward the Creator?

How does man's limited nature relate to God's infinite power?

Why should we be mindful of our human biases when attempting to understand God's nature?

## Lesson plan 1

# Human limitations and biases

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

In this lesson, students begin by exploring the limitations of human nature—namely, that while human beings are capable of higher-ordered thinking, at our very core, we are limited in our knowledge. God's knowledge, in comparison, is far more expansive: He has knowledge of all things all of the time. The first subtheme in this lesson is designed to have students reflect on the differences between the finite nature of humans (with a focus on our limited knowledge) and God's infinite and unlimited nature. This will push students to conclude that our limited human capacity cannot capture God's unlimited nature.

The second sub-theme addresses how the question 'why does God ask people to worship Him?' tends to operate on the faulty presumption that God asks out of human-like desires or neediness. In other words, when the limited human mind attempts to grasp God's full reality, it does so through an anthropocentric prism. This prism creates a tendency to impart human-like qualities to God, and therefore thinks of God as asking to be glorified and obeyed based on human motives such as neediness. Students will learn that to attribute limited human qualities to the Divine is called anthropomorphism and that while humans may share certain aspects of qualities with God such as sight and mercy, these human versions are only poor facsimiles of the greater and more perfect traits of God.

### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- ① Acknowledge their inability to comprehend the nature of their Creator given human limitations. (*cognitive and affective*)
- ② Investigate the human biases implied in the question, "why does God ask us to worship Him?" (*cognitive*)



## Key vocabulary

### Anthropomorphic bias

a cognitive bias that describes the tendency to give human-like attributes to non-human beings, such as physical appearances, emotional states, and personality traits

## Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 90 min

### Lesson plan outline

- Section 1, **slides 1-10:** Exploring our inability, as a limited creation, to comprehend the nature of an infinite Creator
- Section 2, **slides 11-18:** recognizing our tendency to anthropomorphize God although He is utterly unlike His creation
- Optional extension:** resolving the apparent paradox of the human-like descriptions of God in the Qur'an and Sunnah
- Section 3, **slides 19-21:** investigating the anthropomorphic biases implied in the question, "why does God ask us to worship Him?"

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 1 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to play videos
- Printouts of 1.1 and 1.2 for each student
- Post-it notes for each student
- Printout of 1.3 for teacher

### Opening activity (10 min)

#### Section 1

##### **Slide 1 / Journal prompt: Why does God ask people to worship Him?**

- Open lesson one presentation. Begin by reading aloud the displayed verse and its translation. After reading the verse, read aloud the journal prompt on the slide: "Think about this verse. How do you feel about God asking you to worship Him?"
- To prompt student thinking, explain that God is telling us that His primary purpose in creating us is to worship Him. We are commanded to be His servants. How do students feel about being described as God's servant? How do they feel about God commanding us to worship Him? If someone asked them, "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" how would they respond? Give students a few minutes to journal their honest thoughts about this verse.
- Before proceeding, if students are comfortable, call on a few to share their thoughts on the verse and prompt.

##### **Slide 2 / Why does God ask us to worship Him?: lesson outline**

- Proceed to **slide two** and inform students that we will explore three concepts before addressing the question "Why does God ask us to worship Him?":
  - God's infinite nature:** God exists outside of time and space. He has no beginning or end. He is all-Hearing, all-Seeing, and all-Knowing.
  - Human limitations:** Humans, on the other hand, exist within time and space. They have a definite beginning and end. They are limited in their hearing, seeing, and knowledge.
  - Human biases:** Due to our inherent limitations as highlighted above, humans have inescapable biases that do not allow them to fully comprehend the world in an objective fashion. This will be further explored later in this lesson.



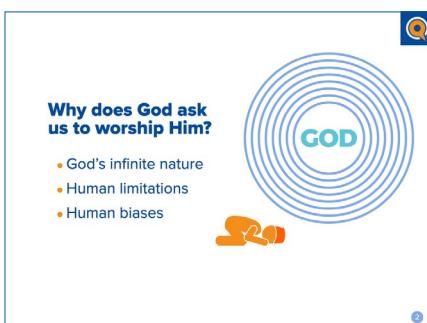
وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I have not created the jinn and humankind except that they should worship Me."  
[Surat al-Dhariyat, 51:56]



#### Teacher's note

The purpose of bringing this question to the forefront of the unit is to engage students and help determine any underlying notions they may have around this question.



**Image perception challenge**  
what do you see?

- Grab a sticky note
- Observe each image for 10-20 seconds
- Jot down the object you see



**Image perception challenge**  
what do you see?

|            |         |           |
|------------|---------|-----------|
|            |         |           |
| apple stem | tea bag | hamburger |

#### Teacher's note

Before playing the video, you may want to tell students to pay attention to the distance on the bottom of the screen and how it changes as the image is zooming out and away from Earth. As a reference, you can tell students that one light year is equivalent to about 5.9 trillion miles.

- The upcoming section will focus on human limitations and God's infinite nature.

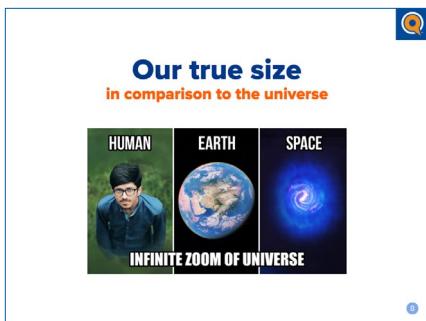
#### Learning activity (75 min)

##### Slides 3-7 / Image perception challenge

- Transition to **slide three**. Inform students that the upcoming activity will highlight the limited nature of human sense-perception.
- To set up the activity, give each student a sticky note or note card and inform them that they will be shown three different images. Each image was captured using a macro lens to highlight unfamiliar complexity found in everyday objects. Tell students to jot down the object they think is photographed, and to be prepared for a discussion and reflection at the end of the activity.
- Proceed to **slide four** to display the first image. Give students 10-20 seconds to observe the image, and then encourage them to guess and write the name of the object. Be sure they do not discuss their answers yet, as they will get a chance to share at the end. Repeat this process with **slide five** and **slide six**. Before revealing the images on the next slide, call on a few students to share their guesses.
- Next, proceed to **slide seven** to zoomed-out images of the three objects pictured on slides 4-6. Gauge student reaction by asking if any of their guesses were correct, and if they are surprised by the image revelation.
- Conclude the activity by explaining that, as humans, sometimes the information our senses gather may seem confusing or incomplete. When we are unsure about something we perceive, we attempt to use our memories or past experiences to make educated guesses and fill in the gaps. Even with the human ability to use sense in order to interpret that which is around us, there are many limitations to this ability, as indicated in this activity.

##### Slide 8 / Video: Our true size in comparison to the universe

- Proceed to **slide eight**. Inform students that they will now add another layer to understanding our human limitations in addition to those explored through the image perception challenge.
- Explain to students that they will watch a short video to gain perspective on the true scale of humankind in comparison to the universe and the rest of God's creation. This will help them begin to recognize God's infinite nature. Tell students to tune into how the content of the video is making them feel, then, play the video: ["The Ultimate Zoom" \(0:00-2:15\)](#).
- After the video, call on a few students to share their initial sentiments about what they viewed. The goal of the video is to have students feel a sense of humility when they realize how tiny we are in comparison to the rest of creation. Ask students to then visualize something greater than the entire universe. After a few seconds, explain that God created all the space seen or imagined by humans and exists outside of it. God does not take up space like His creation and exists beyond anything we can imagine.

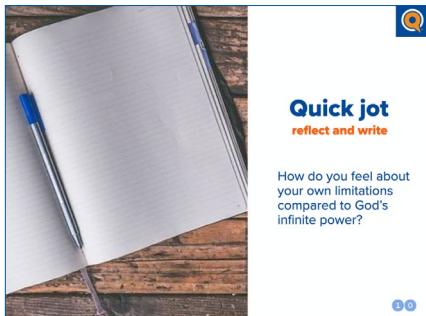


4. At this point, students should begin to recognize that God is greater than all that is in creation, and His knowledge encompasses the entirety of the universe. As humans, our senses are linear. We are not aware of what is happening in the room, building, or home next to us, nor can we have knowledge of all places at all times. Ask students if they can imagine what may be happening in their house at this very moment. How about in their neighbor's home? While we might have some idea, we never have complete knowledge of what is occurring in a certain place even when we are physically present because we still cannot access the internal thoughts and feelings of others. For example, we cannot know for sure what's happening in the mind of anyone in this classroom. We even struggle to know what's going on with the people we are closest to.



### Slide 9 / Not a leaf falls without His knowledge

1. Proceed to **slide nine**. Explain that God exists beyond the scope of all of creation. He is actively aware and has knowledge of all of His creation. He is aware of what is happening everywhere in the universe at every moment. To highlight this, read aloud the verse and translation on the slide. 6:59
2. Next, explain that this verse highlights a special attribute of God: that He has complete knowledge of the unseen. His knowledge is so vast that it includes even the smallest particular, such as a leaf falling deep in the forest. While this is just one example of the vastness of God's knowledge, there are many examples that confirm there is not a tiny particle nor its condition that is excluded from His all-encompassing knowledge.
3. Conclude this discussion by highlighting the limitations in human knowledge when compared to God's knowledge. Remind students that we explored this in two ways: the image perception challenge and the video. From the image perception challenge, remind students how they quickly realized the limitations of their senses because of the difficulty they had in recognizing everyday objects. As it relates to the video, remind students that, unlike us, God has complete knowledge of what is happening whether it is within our homes or beyond.



### Slide 10 / Quick jot

1. To conclude this section, proceed to **slide ten**. Ask students to take some time to reflect on and write about the following: "How do you feel about your own limitations in relation to God's infinite power?"
2. After 2-3 minutes, call on a few students to share their thoughts. Use the sample response below to help facilitate a discussion around this question:

**Sample student response:** The image perception challenge and video in this section highlighted how limited and tiny we are in comparison to God's infinite nature and knowledge. While humans are capable of higher-order thinking and are the most intelligent of God's creation on Earth, at their very core, humans are limited in their ability to fully understand and grasp the world surrounding them. God, on the other hand, has knowledge that is absolute and all-encompassing. There is a clear discrepancy between God's infinite nature and human limitations. At a certain level, especially when we are trying to imagine space beyond the universe, we recognize that it is utterly impossible for limited human knowledge and perception to fully grasp God's infinite nature. 💡

### Teacher takeaway

Humans, by design, are finite and limited creatures. It is due to our limited nature that we are incapable of fully comprehending the reality of an eternal and infinite God. This section highlighted human limitations in two ways: perceptual and cognitive. Through the image perception challenge, students recognized a level of difficulty present when common, everyday objects were presented at an unfamiliar scale. By viewing the zoomed in images, students recognized that, without more information, they were not able to identify the object. If there were successful guesses, they were dependent upon past experiences and memory, and not based on senses alone. Additionally, students explored cognitive limitations by identifying their true size in comparison to the rest of the universe. While humans may possess the trait of knowledge, God possesses knowledge that is perfect and complete. Examining the magnitude and magnificent design of our universe leads us to infer the greatness of the One who brought it into existence. The next section will go into more detail by exploring the human biases that stem from our inherent limitations. We will then return to the question: "Why does God ask us to worship Him?"

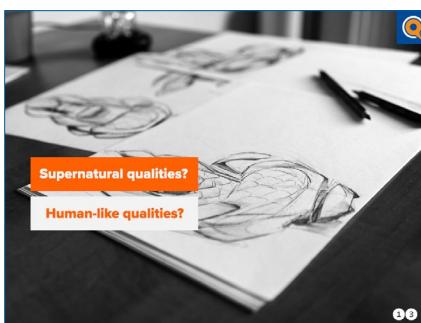
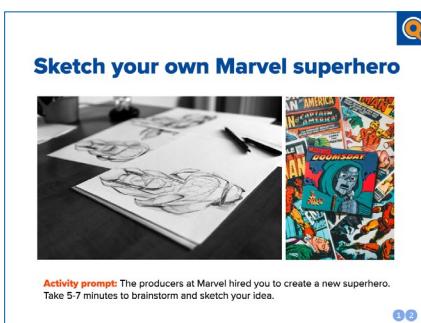
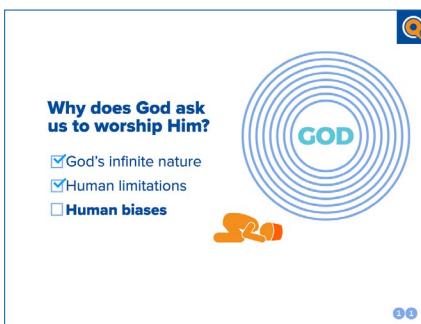
## Section 2

### **Slide 11 / Why does God ask us to worship Him?: human biases**

1. Proceed to **slide eleven** and inform students that so far, they have covered God's infinite nature and our human limitations. This next section explores our human biases that result from our limitations. By understanding the role of human biases, we can fully address the question, "Why does God ask us to worship Him?"
2. Remind students that God's nature is infinite; unlike humans, He has no limitations. However, we are finite, limited creatures with limited knowledge and narrow perspectives. This gives rise to biases that we cannot escape.
  - a. To drive the point home, be sure that students know that a bias is an error in thinking that results from having a prejudiced view and/or misapplying or overgeneralizing from one's limited experiences. The following section explores some examples of human biases.

### **Slides 12-13 / Sketch your own Marvel superhero: student activity**

1. Continue to **slide twelve**. Pass out copies of **1.1 “Anthropomorphism”** and tell students that they are going to complete an activity. The activity prompt goes as follows: "The producers at Marvel hired you to create a new non-human superhero." They have 5-7 minutes to brainstorm and sketch their ideas.
  - a. You may scaffold this activity by pointing out the hint on **1.1 (part one)**: tell students that a superhero is defined as a fictional character that has supernatural powers, which he or she uses for heroic purposes.
  - b. Encourage students to be thorough with their superhero's character profile. Aside from a sketch, they should include descriptive adjectives to demonstrate how their superhero is unlike the others developed by Marvel (or DC).
2. Once time is up, proceed to **slide thirteen**. Go around the room and invite some students to introduce their superheroes to the class.



- a. Ask them to first share the *supernatural qualities* they gave their superhero, meaning the powers their superheroes possess that are beyond the capabilities of ordinary humans.
- b. Then, ask them if their superheroes happen to have any *human-like qualities*: for example, do they resemble humans in their physical appearance? Do they experience emotions like humans? Do they act like humans, and are their actions motivated by the same things as humans? Do they share some personality traits like humans?
3. During the course of the discussion, emphasize every instance in which a student gave his or her superhero human-like qualities. Prompt students to share whether or not they could completely avoid imagining a superhero that has nothing in common with human beings. To conclude the discussion, point out the following:
  - a. In their attempt at brainstorming a new superhero—a fictional character that, by *definition*, is different from humans—many students may have described their superheroes as looking like a human, experiencing certain human emotions, having human personalities and needs, and so on.
  - b. Tell students that this is a bias people have when attempting to conceptualize a non-human. What this human bias is and its impact on our conceptualization of God is the focus of this section.

**Anthropomorphic bias**  
a human tendency

Anthropomorphic bias: a cognitive bias that describes the tendency to give human-like attributes to non-human beings, such as...

- 1 Physical appearances
- 2 Emotional states
- 3 Personality traits

#### Teacher's note

To connect this term to the previous activity, remind students of specific superheroes they characterized as having human-like attributes. Explain that our experience as humans is all we know, and so we cannot escape our tendency to project our humanness onto others, including superheroes and supernatural objects.

- Slide 14 / Anthropomorphic bias: a human tendency**
1. Continue to **slide fourteen**. Explain to students that the Marvel superhero activity demonstrates that we have a tendency to attribute human-like qualities to non-humans. This is what is referred to as **anthropomorphic bias**.
  2. Read aloud the displayed definition of “anthropomorphic bias” and instruct students to copy the definition onto their handout **1.1 (part two): “a cognitive bias that describes the tendency to give human-like attributes to non-human beings.”** This includes physical appearances, emotional states, and personality traits that are characteristic of human beings.
  3. Give students a few minutes to jot down their own examples of our human tendency to anthropomorphize non-humans, using the space provided on **1.1 (part two)**. For example, suggest to students that it is also an anthropomorphic bias to assume that the sun wants to be hidden when it passes behind a cloud, or that the wifi is trolling us or being passive-aggressive when our internet is spotty. The same can be said when we accuse a stoplight of being “too slow” while we are waiting for it to turn green, as if something non-living such as a stoplight is cognizant of time and has the agency of choice.
  4. Call on some students to share their answers.

**Conceptions of god**  
physical attributes

- Slide 15 / Conceptions of God: physical attributes**
1. Proceed to **slide fifteen** and display the images on the slide. Inform students that when humans try to conceptualize God, they usually fall into the trap of anthropomorphic bias.
  2. Display the images of Jesus. Give students a minute to glance at the images and reflect on what they notice.

3. Explain that when Christians began attributing divinity to Jesus, across time and different cultures and societies, they drew images of what they thought God looked like. Byzantines conceived of Jesus as a white man of distinct Byzantine origin although he was Middle Eastern. More recently, black Christians argue that Jesus is a black man and feminists conceptualize Jesus to be a female. It's important to highlight that for Christians, Jesus is recognized as divine. Therefore, any conception of Jesus is an image of god. We can see that God is anthropomorphized in very specific ways according to the culture and values of each group, and that these physical features shift according to the dominant beliefs of that culture.

4. Anthropomorphism is not just when we attribute physical human qualities to God, but it is also to associate emotional or psychological drives and motives to Him. The next section will showcase various examples of this type of anthropomorphic tendency.

### Conceptions of god

emotional attributes

"god's" emotions

Angry Aloof Powerless

Human emotions

#### **Slide 16 / Conceptions of God: emotional attributes**

1. Proceed to **slide sixteen** and give students a few minutes to observe the images and the emotions being highlighted. Inform students that the top row of images are representative of "god's" emotions, as they have been depicted through actors in movies and sitcoms. The bottom row depicts these same emotions from a human perspective.
2. After students have had a few minutes to observe the images, you may call on a few students to share their initial thoughts, and then use the following points to facilitate a discussion:

- a. Human beings were created with complex emotions, which are fundamental to the human soul. Whether it is love, anger, compassion etc., humans are provoked by their surroundings and react based on how an action makes them feel.
- b. On the other hand, God describes Himself using specific attributes. Some of these attributes include: The Most Compassionate (al-Rahim), The Most Loving (al-Wadud), The Most Kind (al-Ra'uf), etc. Yet, the important difference is that these attributes describe fundamental aspects of God's nature as opposed to reactionary responses to specific events. For instance, some people mistakenly believe that God is emotionally provoked to act in anger. However, when we view God in this way, we inadvertently ascribe human-like emotion to Him, thereby falling into anthropomorphic bias.

### Flaws in the human perception of God

"The Abyssinians (Ethiopians) see their god as flat-nosed, while the Thracians give him red hair and blue eyes... And if cows and horses and lions had hands, and were capable of drawing, the horses would draw gods in horse form, and the cows would in cow form."

- Xenophanes, ancient Greek philosopher (d. 475 BC)

#### **Slides 17-18 / Flaws in a human perception of God**

1. To summarize the human tendency to anthropomorphize God, proceed to **slide seventeen** and read the following quote: "The Abyssinians (Ethiopians) see their god as flat-nosed, while the Thracians give him red hair and blue eyes... And if cows and horses and lions had hands, and were capable of drawing, the horses would draw gods in horse form, and the cows would in cow form."
2. This is a comical quote, but it highlights the main point of this section. Xenophanes, the ancient Greek philosopher to whom this quote is attributed, points to our difficulty in perceiving God without some human bias. Refer back to the images of Jesus that students explored on slide fourteen. Remind them how these types of images project a person's own attributes onto their understanding of God. For example, the

changes in skin tone and features mirrored the attributes of the person that created the image.

3. Next, explain to students that in the opening of this lesson, we highlighted that, due to His infinite nature, God exists beyond time and space. Due to this quality of God, it becomes inherently problematic to conceptualize God to resemble human beings, or anything of His creation for that matter. We have come to recognize that humans cannot escape the tendency to anthropomorphize God. Therefore, given our human limitations (i.e., anthropomorphic bias), we must recognize our need for revelation as the method through which God informs us of Himself.

4. Proceed to **slide eighteen**. Have a student read aloud the displayed verse and its translation, and then follow it with the commentary below. 

a. This verse emphatically declares that nothing is like God; He is utterly different from and transcendent above His creation. That means that however we imagine God in our minds will invariably fall short of His reality. In Islamic theology, there is a maxim that states: “No matter how you imagine God in your mind, He is simply other than that.” *كُلُّ مَا خَطَرَ بِنَارِكَ قَالَ اللَّهُ بِخَلْفِ ذَكِيرٍ*.

b. Inform students that this verse should allow us to confront doubtful or problematic descriptions of God by reminding us that those conceptions are not actually true. Rather, they represent the constraints of human thought rather than reflecting the Real Nature of God.

c. **Optional extension** 

5. Tell students to keep this verse and commentary in mind for the rest of the lesson. On the next slide, they will use this verse as well as their understanding of anthropomorphism to confront the major question in the unit: “Why does God ask us to worship Him?” 

#### Teacher takeaway

In this section, students explore the third concept—anthropomorphic bias—that is essential to understand before addressing the question, “Why does God ask us to worship Him?” When attempting to sketch their superheroes, students realized their inherent tendency to anthropomorphize. After noticing how they were unable to avoid operating from this bias when sketching, students recognized how we, as humans, conceptualize God as our reflection and project human-like emotional states and personality traits onto Him.

Once students have acknowledged that humans cannot escape anthropomorphism, the question becomes: how can humans come to know God if we cannot escape our human bias? By exploring anthropomorphic depictions of God prior to reading the verse on slide eighteen (God Himself informs us through revelation that He is utterly unlike His Creation), students can understand the significance of the verse on their own, having seen first-hand the problem with describing God in a human-like way. In the next section, students will explore the main question of this unit and recognize the bias in the question itself.



لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

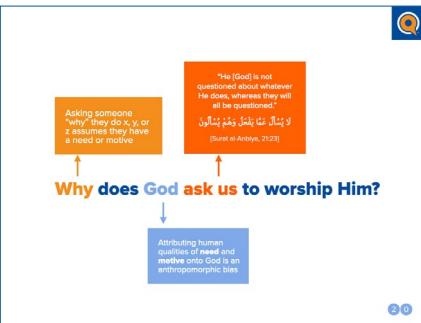
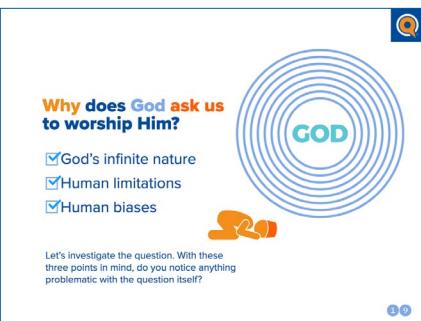
“There is nothing like God, and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing.”  
[Surat al-Shura, 42:11]

#### Teacher’s note

When students reflect on the verse from Surat al-Shura, “There is nothing like God, and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing,” they may sense an apparent paradox. The verse presents two seemingly contradictory realities about God: He is utterly unlike His creation, **and paradoxically**, He can see and hear as humans and many animals can. In other verses and prophetic narrations, God is described as plotting, planning, speaking, ascending and descending His throne, descending to the lowest heaven, running to His servant, and so on. Students may wonder, in these human-like descriptions, is God anthropomorphizing Himself? You may pause the lesson here and transition to **Lesson plan 1 optional extension** (and its correlating presentation slides) to help students resolve that apparent paradox.

### Section 3

#### Slides 19-20 / Why does God ask us to worship Him?



1. Proceed to **slide nineteen**. Inform students that we have highlighted three concepts in this lesson: God's infinite nature, human limitations, and human biases that stem from such limitations. Ask students to reexamine the question, "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" Prompt them to reflect, "With these three points in mind, do you notice anything problematic with the question itself?" Call on a few students to share their thoughts. At this point, students should begin problematizing the question using what they learned throughout the lesson.

2. After hearing thoughts about the question from a few students, proceed to **slide twenty** and inform students that they will finally deconstruct the question together as a whole class, using what they learned about God's infinite nature, human limitations, and human biases.
3. While building onto what they shared of their own analyses (using the commentary below), instruct students to take notes on their copies of **1.1 (part four)**. Invite them to ask questions for clarification on any of the major points.

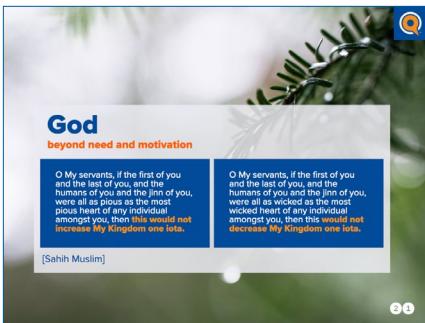
- WHY | Asking someone “why” they do x, y, or z assumes they have a need or motive:** When we ask a person “why”—*why* they are behaving in a certain way, or why they are commanding us to do something – we are seeking to uncover the reason or motive driving their behavior. This makes sense if and only if we are thinking about beings similar to ourselves (e.g., other humans). However, God's infinite nature necessitates that He is utterly different from us. We are limited by need and motive, whereas He is not. Therefore, attributing needs to a being beyond need (i.e., God) is not becoming of Him.
- GOD | Attributing human qualities of need and motive onto God is an anthropomorphic bias:** It is human nature to act out of need or motive. Instinctively, we know that everything we do and experience is caused by something even when we aren't aware of what that cause may be. A person doing absolutely nothing at all may be driven by the need to rest and recuperate. Humans are limited by needs, but projecting that human limitation onto God, who is utterly free of need, is anthropomorphic bias. Therefore, we are mistaken when we ask God “why” because He does not have needs or motives that determine His actions, as humans do.
- ASK US | “He [God] is not questioned about whatever He does, whereas they will all be questioned” 21:23:** Posing the question, “Why does God ask us to worship Him” is a form of questioning God's actions. This verse from Surat al-Anbiya reminds us that God's actions cannot be questioned, analyzed, or understood in the way human actions are. God is infinite in His nature. And while we are encouraged to reflect on His names and attributes and how they manifest in our physical world, we should keep in mind that our finite, limited minds will never encompass His full reality.

4. After providing students with the above commentary, give them some additional time to ask any questions they have on the human biases embedded in the question “Why does God ask us to worship Him?”



لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ

“He is not questioned about whatever He does, whereas they will all be questioned”  
[Surat Al-Anbiya, 21:23]



## Consolidation (5 min)

### Slide 21 / God: beyond need and motive

1. Proceed to **slide twenty-one** and remind students that this lesson establishes God's dissimilarity to His creation. He is utterly unlike us humans in our physical qualities and also in our mental and emotional states. Our existence has no effect on Him. The same goes for all our actions, including our worship.
2. Next, call on a student to read aloud the displayed hadith: "O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as pious as the most pious heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not increase My Kingdom one iota. 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 as wicked as the most wicked heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not decrease My Kingdom one iota" [Sahih Muslim]. Reiterate that whether or not we worship God, obey His commands, and do good deeds, our actions do not benefit or harm God in any way.
3. Conclude the lesson by telling students that if God is not in any need of us—including our worship—then the next question to ask is: how can we best understand His command for us to worship Him? This question will be addressed in the second lesson.



### Teacher takeaway

In this lesson, students began by examining their limited frame of reference as humans. They then explored the tendency to describe other beings, from fictional characters to divine beings, using physical and emotional human attributes (anthropomorphism). Students come to recognize that this bias is erroneous when it comes to our conceptions of God because God is utterly unlike anything in creation. This prepares them for the main question in this unit. Students deconstruct the question "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" to discover that it carries an implicit, mistaken bias that assumes God is motivated to act based on needs and wants when, in reality, He is beyond any kind of external cause. [If they take part in the optional activity, students also explore why Qur'anic language that appears to describe God in human-like terms is not, in fact, anthropomorphic and therefore not subject to this bias.]

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| name: _____  | date: _____   |  |
| <b>Anthropomorphism</b>  |   |  |
| a human bias in our conception of God  |   |  |
| 1. Marvel sketch   |   |  |
| Prompt: The producers at Marvel hired you to create a new superhero. Use the space below to brainstorm and sketch your idea. [Hint: A superhero is defined as a fictional character that has supernatural powers, which he or she uses for heroic purposes.] |   |  |
|   |   |  |
| 2. Defining the term   |   |  |
| Anthropomorphic bias:  |   |  |
|   |   |  |
| Jot down some examples of anthropomorphic bias to demonstrate your understanding of the term.  |   |  |
| a.   |  |  |
| b.   |  |  |
| c.   |  |  |
| 1.1 Anthropomorphic bias   |   |  |

## Stage 3: Assessments

### Formative assessments

1. The quick jot on slide ten will serve as a formative assessment to measure student understanding of the first objective. By reflecting on the perception challenge and video, students should acknowledge their human limitations in fully grasping God's infinite nature. In addition, students should display signs of being in awe of God and recognize that as opposed to humans, God has knowledge that is absolute and all-encompassing.
2. To assess the second objective, you may use the questions on handout **1.1 “Anthropomorphism”** and the follow-up discussion. During the handout, students undergo a four-part investigation process that builds up to the second objective. They begin with the Marvel activity which shows students they themselves have a tendency to attribute human-like qualities to non-human beings (i.e., fictional superheroes). This experience paves the way for the definition of “anthropomorphic bias.” Additionally, to measure their understanding of the term, they further provide their own examples. This step allows them to apply their understanding of the bias to different conceptions of God, both physical (e.g., images of Jesus) and emotional (e.g., pop culture references). At the end of this investigation, students conclude by deconstructing the question “why does God ask us to worship Him?” and highlighting the human biases implied within it.

## Teacher's note

The summative assessment for this lesson, which assesses both objectives, is meant to provide modern day examples of the way god is depicted with an anthropomorphic bias. Due to the blasphemous depictions of god in these clips, students may feel uncomfortable while watching them. However, they were intentionally selected to highlight how human limitations have created a faulty perception of God. Consequently, these faulty perceptions lead to the creation of a god unworthy of worship. Watching these clips in a classroom setting will help provide a safe space for students to deconstruct what they may be exposed to outside of a classroom setting. To administer this assessment, it is recommended to set students up in class by reading through the directions and watching the clips together in the classroom. Then, the reflection questions can be a take-home assignment. Refer to **1.3 “Anthropomorphizing god: teacher reference”** to determine if student responses are aligned with the objectives of this lesson.

## Summative assessment

1. To set students up for this assessment, provide each student with handout **1.2 “Anthropomorphizing god.”** Then, read aloud the paragraph about God vs. god and inform students that our human tendency to anthropomorphize God may result in a god unworthy of worship.
2. Next, tell students that they will view three television clips from Western pop culture wherein god is being anthropomorphized. Emphasize to students that the clips grossly misrepresent the One True God, worthy of worship. They are faulty, satirical depictions that represent the way people perceive god in Western secular societies.
3. After the clip, call on a few students to share their thoughts on how it made them feel to see god being depicted in a belittling way. Then, inform them that they will complete the reflection questions as a take-home assignment. You may use **1.3 “Anthropomorphizing god: teacher reference”** to help determine if students are meeting the objectives of this lesson.

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_ 

### Anthropomorphizing god a human tendency

**Directions:** The following activity showcases examples of anthropomorphizing god in Western pop culture. As you work through this activity, be mindful of how the clips make you feel about the way god is being depicted, while knowing full well that the God we worship is unlike anything the human mind can imagine. Then, answer the reflection questions based on what you read below and viewed in the clips.

**Part I | Read**  
God vs. The gods below are a part of the reflection section.  
Our human limitations and faulty perceptions of God have led us to create a god with human-like tendencies, resulting in a god not worthy of worship. Islamic theology and our belief in One True God worthy of all praise and worship steers clear from associating human qualities and motivations to God. It is only when we truly internalize and understand that “there is nothing like Him,” [Surat al-Shura, 42:11] that we will stop transplanting our expectations and realities upon God.

**Part II | Watch**



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Miracle Workers: A sitcom set at Heaven Inc. featuring a very god and overworked angels. | The Simpsons: A cartoon series that ridicules aspects of American culture, society and politics. | Even Almighty: A congresswoman is contacted by her computer for an incoming flood. |
| <a href="#">Miracle Workers Clip - "God Can't Read"</a>                                  | <a href="#">The Simpsons Home Take to God</a>  | <a href="#">Even Almighty-Acts of Random Kindness</a>                              |

13 Anthropomorphizing god

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_ 

### Anthropomorphizing god teacher reference

Teachers may use this guide as a reference to determine student understanding of the objectives. The responses provided here are samples. They are intended to provide guidance to ensure that student responses are aligned with the objectives of the lesson. Students are not expected to respond in exactly the same way the sample responses are written.

**Reflect | Sample responses**

1. List the human biases present in each of the examples.
  - Miracle Workers:
    - god is illiterate
    - due to his inability to read, he is portrayed as an aloof, uneducated being
    - the “angels” in the clip begin assume they are more knowledgeable than god
    - god is a white male with silky, gray hair
  - Simpsons:
    - humans can negotiate with god to avoid worship
    - god is interested in sports
    - god is an angry being that punishes those he is displeased with
    - god is large and overpowering
  - Even Almighty:
    - god is a bald man in a white suit
    - humans have the ability to question god’s motives
    - god requires humans to enact his plans
    - god has white hair and is old
2. The god they are critiquing and making fun of is not a god worthy of worship. Agree or disagree?
3. As evident in the video clips, Western pop culture is constantly exposing us to a particular image of god. How might these depictions impact your personal relationship with God and your fundamental notions of who God is?

*Pop culture, as seen in the clips, applies anthropomorphic biases when depicting god. These biases imply that god is similar to human beings, and in some cases, may not even be divine at all in our minds. Being exposed to these types of references will inevitably impact our own understanding of God. If we consume images/depictions of God that are anthropomorphic without recognizing this bias, we risk internalizing beliefs and attitudes towards God that have no true basis.*

13 Anthropomorphizing god teacher reference

## Lesson plan 1 optional extension

# God: beyond need and motive

Total time: 15 min

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 1 (optional extension) presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to play videos

**Begin this optional extension** at the end of lesson one's section two (slide eighteen). Once you have completed this optional extension, you may return to lesson one and resume at the start of section three (slide nineteen).

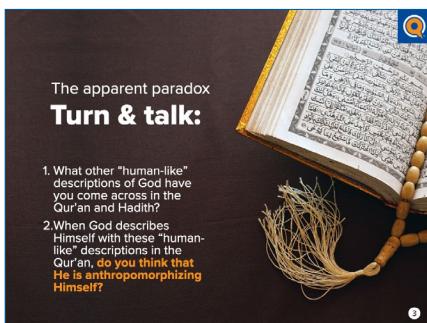
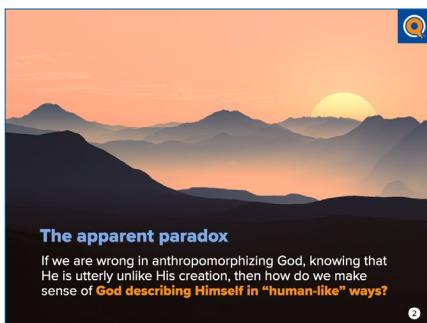


لَيْسَ كُمِثْلَهُ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing like God, and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing."  
[Surat al-Shura, 42:11]

### Teacher's note

If students are unfamiliar with other descriptions, provide them examples from the guided response.



### Slide 1 / There is nothing like God and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing

1. Open lesson plan one optional extension, **slide one**, and read aloud the displayed verse and its translation, and then follow it with the commentary below.
2. The first half of this verse emphatically declares that nothing is like God. He is utterly different from and transcendent above His creation. That means that however we imagine God in our minds will invariably fall short of His reality. In Islamic theology, there is a maxim that states: "No matter how you imagine God in your mind, He is simply other than that" (كُلُّ مَا حَطَرَ يَبِالِكَ فَاللَّهُ بِخَلْفِ ذِكِّرِكَ).
- a. Inform students that the first half of this verse should allow us to confront doubtful or problematic descriptions of God by reminding us that those conceptions are not actually true; rather, they represent the constraints of human thought rather than a reflection of the real nature of God.
- b. Interestingly, the verse ends with God highlighting two of His divine attributes, "hearing" and "seeing," which He shares with His human and animal creation. God is not like us, *and* He can hear and see (seemingly) like us. Are the first and second parts of the verse contradictory? How can two apparently opposite statements be true at the same time?

### Slides 2-3 / The apparent paradox

1. Transition to **slide two**. Explain to students that the verse from Surat al-Shura presents an apparent paradox: "If we are mistaken in anthropomorphizing God (i.e., to attribute human-like qualities to Him), knowing that He is utterly unlike His creation, then how do we make sense of God describing Himself in 'human-like' ways?"
2. Continue to **slide three** to provide students an opportunity to recall other human-like descriptions of God in the Qur'an and Hadith. Instruct them to turn to an elbow partner and complete a turn-and-talk around the following two questions:
  - a. What other human-like descriptions of God have you come across in the Qur'an and Hadith?

*Guided student response:* In some Qur'anic verses and hadith narrations, God is also described as laughing, speaking, being angry and/or happy with His creation, ascending and descending His throne, descending to

the lowest heaven, possessing a hand, and so on. These descriptions suggest that God moves through physical space, that He is emotive, and that He has a body and sense-perception—descriptions that overlap with those of humankind.

- b. When God describes Himself with these “human-like” descriptions in the Qur'an, do you think that He is anthropomorphizing Himself?

*Guided student response:* No, He is not anthropomorphizing Himself, even if it appears as such. God is not like His creation.

3. After a few minutes, call on some students to share their answers. Use the guided student responses above to facilitate the class conversation.

#### Teacher's note

Challenge the class to think outside of the box and brainstorm answers that are non-living.

#### **Slides 4-6 / Understanding the “human-like” descriptions of God**

1. To help students resolve this apparent paradox, transition to **slide four** and prepare them for an activity. Divide the class into two, Group A and Group B, and then read aloud the instructions on the slide: “Grab a pencil and paper. Group A, list as many things you can think of that **possess a leg**. Group B, list as many things you can think of that **possess an eye**.” Set the timer to 30-60 seconds while students complete the activity.

2. Once time is up, call on students from Group A and Group B to share their responses. Keep track of what students are sharing and then expand on their list using the lists below:

- a. Group A, “**legs**,” sample student response:

Living creatures (leg of a human, leg of an insect, leg of an animal)  
Race or journey (each distinct part is referred to as a “leg”)  
Home furniture (chairs, couches, stools)  
Triangle (each side is called a “leg”)  
Tripod

- b. Group B, “**eyes**,” sample student response:

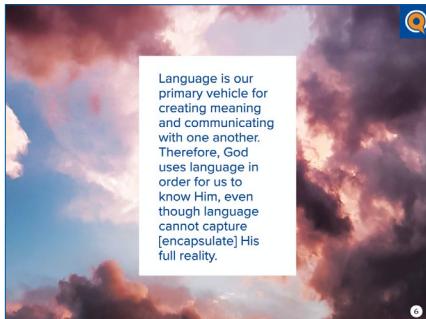
Living creatures (eye of a human, eye of an insect, eye of an animal)  
Weather systems (eye of a hurricane and the eye of a tornado are the calm centers of the storm)  
Sewing needles (the eye of a needle is the hole where the thread is inserted)  
Potatoes (the eye of a potato is the white bud where a new potato is beginning to sprout)  
Envious hearts (the evil eye)  
Aspen trees (the eye of the tree is the scar that forms where the tree has shed smaller, malnourished branches)  
Surveillance (spies are said to be the “eyes on the ground”)

3. Move onto **slide five** and point to the various images of “eyes”—the eye of a hurricane, the eye of a human, and the eye of a needle, and then point to the various images of “legs”—the leg of a race, the leg of a human, and the leg of a chair. Then, provide students with the following information:

- a. Statement: “Sometimes the same word can refer to very different things or objects that are completely unrelated. Just because two or more things share the same **linguistic description**, it does not mean they are the **same kind of thing**.

- b. Elaboration: Concretize this concept to students by reminding students of their lists from the previous activity. As they may have realized during the activity, many things share the description of an “eye” and yet they have nothing in common.
- c. Application: This concept applies to our understanding of God’s “human-like” descriptions in the Qur'an and Hadith. Whenever God and humans share a trait, that does not necessitate identicality, **but only a similarity in the name used to describe that trait**. Just as the leg of a race is not the leg of a dog and the eye of a storm is not the eye of a human, the traits of humans are only poor facsimiles of the greater and more perfect traits of God. Therefore, we can affirm that God possesses hands without likening them to human hands. Doing so is an anthropomorphic bias, which leads to a conceptualization of a god unworthy of worship.

4. Finally, conclude the optional extension with the final note on [slide six](#): “Language is our primary vehicle for creating meaning and communicating with one another. Therefore, God uses language in order for us to know Him, even though language cannot capture [encapsulate] His full reality.”



#### Teacher takeaway

Central to lesson one is the realization that we humans have a tendency to anthropomorphize God in a way that diminishes His uniqueness and deems Him unworthy of worship. In the Islamic tradition, the act of anthropomorphizing God is called *tashbih*. Historically and today, Muslim scholars have avoided *tashbih* because the Qur'an emphatically declares that God is unlike His creation: He does not resemble us in our physical appearances, our emotional states, our personality traits, and so on. At the same time, God is described in His revelation as sharing many traits with human beings. Students may hence wonder: if we are faulty in our human-like conceptions of God, then why do the Qur'an and Hadith describe God in seemingly anthropomorphic ways? This optional extension was intended to help students reconcile this apparent paradox in Islamic scripture.



Instructions and activities

## **Lesson 1**

## ***Lesson 2 • Indebted to God***

## **Lesson 3**



## Essential questions

Why should we feel obligated to worship God?

What is a comprehensive definition of worship?

How are worship and *ubudiyah* related?



## Key vocabulary

### Kufr

The state of ingratitude where one chooses to conceal God as the Originator, Cherisher, and Nurturer of the universe

### Worship

Acts undertaken with the intent of obeying God's commands (whether ritual or non-ritual); done out of indebtedness, gratitude, pursuit of God's pleasure, and so on

### *Ubudiyah*

A resulting state of being that forms a God-centered mindset in which every day actions are transformed into acts of worship

## Lesson plan 2

# Indebted to God

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

The previous lesson makes it clear the question, “why does God ask to be worshiped?” should be met with a stark recognition that human minds are simply incapable of accessing God’s motives. This does not mean, however, we cannot recognize some of the beauty and wisdom behind worship. Throughout the Qur'an, God's call to mankind to worship Him is accompanied with reminders and examples of His benevolence and love. He asks us to consider the wide swathes of earth we call home, the skies of beauty and utility, the water He sends pouring to quench our thirst and causes produce to grow, all for our sustenance. One can hardly read verse to verse without God's benevolence and love being explained. We can conclude from these reflections that God's requests and demands for worship arise both from His absolute power and will and His compassionate regard for our well-being and benefit. This lesson attempts to bring to life some of these divine names and attributes in a way that resonates with each student. As our Rabb, He is our Creator, Sustainer, and Provider, and is thus worthy of our gratitude. Considering the immense blessings He has bestowed upon His creation, we should naturally feel compelled to worship Him. Refusing to do so is an expression of *kufr*, or ingratitude for all of His favors.

### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- ① Understand that we are obligated to worship God due to our indebtedness to Him. (*cognitive*)
- ② Appreciate and recognize God's constant presence and involvement in our lives. (*affective & cognitive*)
- ③ (Optional): Understand the meaning of worship as it relates to the mind, body, and heart. (*cognitive*)

## Stage 2: Learning plan

**Total time: 60 min**

### Lesson plan outline

- Section 1, **slides 1-6**: how much are we actually in control?
- Section 2, **slides 7-10**: understanding God as Al-Rabb, the Cherisher and Nourisher of His creation
- Optional extension beginning after **slide 12**: exploring the comprehensive meaning of worship
- Section 3, **slides 11-13**: widening our scope of what it means to worship.

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 2 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation
- Printouts of 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 for each student
- Post-it notes (one per student)

### Opening activity (10 min)

#### Section 1

##### **Slide 1 / Recap**

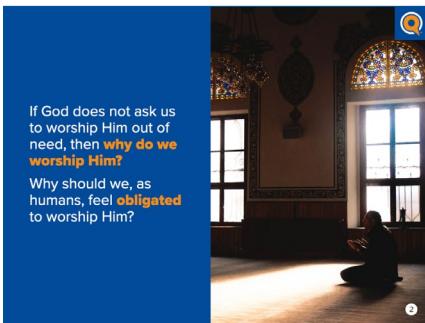
**Recap**

On your post-it note, recall the problem with the question, "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" Be sure to incorporate...

- God's infinite nature
- Human limitations
- Human biases

1. Open the lesson two presentation and go to **slide one**. To help students recall the main takeaway from lesson one, pass out post-it notes and instruct students to spend two minutes completing the following task: "On your post-it note, recall the problem with the question, 'Why does God ask us to worship Him?' In your response, be sure to incorporate your thoughts about God's infinite nature, our human limitations, and our human biases (e.g., anthropomorphic bias)."
2. Once time is up, invite students to stick their post-its on an empty classroom wall. Glance through their post-its and intentionally select 1 or 2 incomplete or less developed responses. Read them aloud and ask students what they feel should be added. Then, select 1-2 well-formulated responses to read aloud. Intentionally selecting both well formulated and less developed responses will allow for an opportunity to provide feedback and strengthen the concepts from the previous lesson.
3. Use the sample student response below to expand on the discussion as needed:

**Sample student response:** God is unlike anything our minds can comprehend. He is infinite and exists beyond the dimensions of time and space. We, humans, on the other hand, are a limited creation that are bound by time and space. Everything we do is prompted by a cause or motivated by a need, want, or desire. When God acts—such as commanding us to worship Him—He isn't reacting to events as they unfold, nor is He motivated by need, want, or desire. Therefore, the question "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" is problematic because it is rooted in our own anthropomorphic biases. These biases attribute human qualities of need and motive onto God, assuming that God acts like humans, while He is utterly unlike His creation.



If God does not ask us to worship Him out of need, then **why do we worship Him?**  
Why should we, as humans, feel **obligated** to worship Him?

### Teacher's note

The questions on this slide are not intended to be answered at this point. These questions are listed here to have students keep them in mind as they work through this lesson. By the end of this lesson, students will have a better understanding of both of these questions.

**The human body**  
a sixty-second overview

**YOUR BODY IN 60 SECONDS**

What does it take for your body to stay alive for 60 seconds? Watch the video and fill in as many spaces as possible on **2.1**.

**The human body**  
a sixty-second overview

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Your body produces 120 million red blood cells.           | You blink 15-20 times.                                   | You release 0.008 liters of CO <sub>2</sub> .           |
| Your eyes process 600 million bits of visual information. | 88 billion electrical signals pass between your neurons. | The strands of hair on your head grow 0.02 millimeters. |
| 1.2 liters of blood are filtered in your kidneys.         | You shed 30,000 dead skin cells.                         | Your mouth produces 0.03 ounces of saliva.              |
| Your body produces 100 watts of electricity.              | Your brain generates 50 unique thoughts.                 | You inhale 16 times.                                    |

What surprises you the most after learning what it takes for your body to stay alive for the next 60 seconds?

### Teacher's note

To generate excitement among students, you may turn this video activity into a competition, where the student that fills out the most spaces on handout **2.1** earns a prize.

**The human body**  
beyond our control

**Turn & talk:**  
Think about the sheer number of processes taking place in your body... How do you feel after knowing that the functions you need to survive are **outside of your control**?

### Slide 2 / Questions for the lesson ahead

- Continue to **slide two**. Reiterate that, instead of attempting to understand God's "motive" for commanding us to worship Him—which He does not have—perhaps a more appropriate question is the following: "If God does not ask us to worship Him out of need, then why do we worship Him?" In other words: "Why should we, as humans, feel **obligated** to worship God?"
- Inform students that this lesson will explore the nature of our obligation to worship God.

### Learning activity (45 min)

#### Slides 3-4 / The human body: a sixty-second overview

- Proceed to **slide three** and pass out copies of **2.1 "God: the One worthy of worship"**.
- Inform students that, in order to answer the question from the previous slide, "Why should we feel obligated to worship God?", we will turn to the creation that we are most familiar with: the human body.
- To set up the activity, first ask students the question: "What does it take for your body to stay alive for 60 seconds?"
- Inform students that they are going to watch a short video that goes over the various functions in the human body that take place every sixty-seconds. While they watch, instruct them to fill in as many spaces as possible on handout **2.1**.
- Then, play the video ["This will happen to your body in the next 60 seconds."](#)
- Proceed to **slide four** and allow students thirty seconds to fill in any remaining blanks they missed. While students fill in the blanks, ask them to think about the question on the bottom of the slide: **"What surprises you the most after learning what it takes for your body to stay alive for 60 seconds?"** Instruct students to highlight or circle 2-3 facts that were most surprising to them. They will refer back to this table in the upcoming slides.

#### Slides 5-6 / The human body: beyond our control

- Proceed to **slide five**. Ask students to think about the sheer number of processes taking place in their body. Then, to prompt students to reflect on all the information on the table from the previous slide, instruct them to discuss the following question with an elbow partner: **"How do you feel after knowing that the functions you need to survive are outside of your control?"**

**Sample student response:** Students should feel stunned and in awe of how much goes on in our bodies without us realizing it. If we had to voluntarily think about these functions in order to stay alive, we would spend every minute of every day simply remembering to breathe, blink, and pump blood throughout our bodies. In other words, we would have to spend all our time and energy on staying alive.

- Proceed to **slide six**. Ask students to refer back to the facts they found to be most surprising. Then, read aloud the question on the slide: "Choose one of your circled or highlighted surprising facts. **Can you take credit for this function happening in your body right now?**"

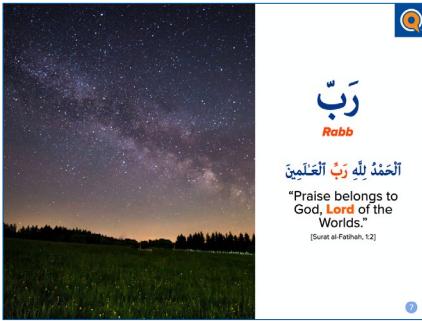


- Students will quickly realize that they have no control over the involuntary bodily functions happening at every second in their bodies. Inform students that we cannot take credit for these processes and must recognize that it is God who sustains us at every moment of our existence. He causes countless bodily functions to unfold perfectly, every minute of every day. Whether we are asleep or awake, conscious of it or not, we utterly depend on Him to continue existing.

- Conclude this discussion by highlighting that God is constantly interacting with us to sustain our bodies and keep us alive. This will be explored further in the upcoming slides.

## Section 2

### Slide 7 / Rabb: Lord of the worlds



الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds."  
[Surat al-Fatiha, 1:2]

- Proceed to **slide seven**. Briefly remind students that we cannot take credit for the involuntary bodily functions that keep us alive. Highlight the name "Rabb" on the slide and inform students that God's constant care for us is reflected in His name Rabb.

- Read aloud the displayed verse and its translation, and inform students that the very first name that God uses to introduce Himself in the first chapter of the Qur'an is the word **rabb** or Lord.

- Next, provide students with the following commentary: The name Rabb holds many meanings. It refers both to: (a) God as the **Originator** and **Creator** of everything. It goes beyond to include: (b) His status as the **Nurturer**, **Sustainer**, and **Cherisher** of His creation. To drive this point home, share this example with students: God not only brought us from nothingness into existence, but as the video showed, He also continues to maintain our bodies every single day by recreating our cells, chemical processes, and so on.

- Reiterate to students that, as our Rabb, God is the Owner of everything in existence. He maintains the existence of and cares for every single aspect of His creation. On the human scale, He constantly ensures our growth and well-being in ways beyond the basic functions of the human body.

### Slide 8 / Rabb: "He is with you wherever you are"



وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

"He is with you wherever you are."  
[Surat al-Hadid, 57:4]

- Proceed to **slide eight** and read aloud the verse at the bottom of the slide . Explain that when we understand that God is our Nurturer and Sustainer, we come to realize that He alone is to be credited with our very existence. His care for us extends from our bodily health to all aspects of life.

- Inform students that this slide visually highlights the name Rabb and the different elements in which He nourishes us **beyond** the functions of our human body. Give students a few minutes to observe the images on the slide. After students reflect on the slide silently, you may select a few images or use the examples below to reflect on the slide as a whole group.

3. Then, direct student attention to the ring displaying more of God's names (e.g., al-Muheet, al-Wadud, al-Khaliq, and so on). Encourage students to follow along on handout **2.1** as you explain (using the commentary below) how these names reflect His intimate involvement in every aspect of our lives:
  - a. As we saw previously, God maintains the functions of our **bodies** on a minute scale. For example, He is constantly creating and recreating the cells and biochemical processes that give us life, which manifests His name **al-Khaliq** (the Creator). Beyond the cellular level, He takes care of our bodies by providing us with nourishment, which physically sustains us. He is therefore **al-Razzaq** (the Provider) and **al-Muheet** (the Sustainer).
  - b. Next, inform students that God nurtures us beyond our physical functions. On an **emotional** level, God is the source of love, such as in the loving bond between a mother and child, making Him **al-Wadud** (the Most-Loving). He is aware of emotions that we may not even admit to ourselves, for He is **al-Lateef** (the Subtle/the Gentle). He is also **al-Ra'uf** (the Most-Kind) who puts love in our hearts towards others, and in the hearts of those who love us.
  - c. Continue by explaining that He also cares for our **intellect**. For example, God is **al-Aleem** (the all-Knowing) and is the source of all human knowledge. We cannot come to know anything without Him. He is **al-Hakeem** (the all-Wise), so everything that happens in our lives is out of His wisdom. His name **al-Hafeedh** (the Preserver) indicates that He preserves our intellect, memories, and other mental faculties, and preserves knowledge from one generation to the next.
4. Remind students that these are only a handful of God's names and a limited set of examples. Yet, they are enough to show that there is no aspect or moment where God's constant care and concern are not operating in our lives. As the verse on the slide states: "He is with you wherever you are." This is the meaning of God being our **Rabb**.



#### Teacher's note

The goal of this slide is to have students internalize how involved God is in their lives. Students come to see that God is not an "absentee god," as some depictions would have them believe (you may refer here to the video clips from lesson one). By having students reflect on the names from their own experience, they will recognize that we all owe everything we have to God. The realization brings them to a state of humility that prepares them for the next slide.

#### **Slide 9 / He is with you wherever you are: a personal reflection**

1. Proceed to **slide nine** and inform students that they will now reflect on a time that they have personally connected with one of God's names. As they look over the slide, instruct them to choose one of the names and connect it to a time where they have witnessed that chosen name manifest itself in their lives.
2. Give students 4-5 minutes to jot down their experience on handout **2.1**. Remind them that they can use the "Rabb: He is with you wherever you are" table as a guide.
3. If students struggle to come up with a connection, consider using a story from your own life to model a response for them:

**Sample teacher response:** When I was applying to college, I had a lot of anxiety about how I would manage all of the expenses related to the next chapter in my life. As I applied for scholarships, I made constant *du'a* and eventually got enough funding to cover all my fees. As my fears faded away, I felt like I was experiencing God's name al-Razzaq (The Provider).

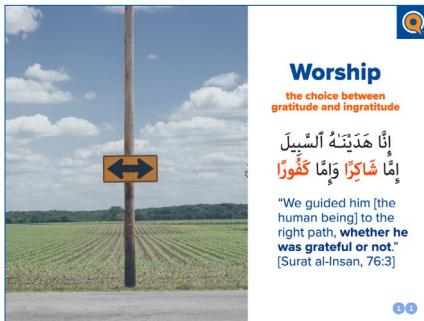
- To conclude this reflection, call on some students to share their responses. Point out that when we truly understand how much God is doing for us in every minute of every day, we should feel a sense of indebtedness towards Him.



### Slide 10 / Indebted to God: should we not be grateful?

- Proceed to **slide ten**. Call on a student to read the following hadith to the class: “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?’”
- The Prophet ﷺ taught us in this hadith that worshiping God is an expression of gratitude for how much He does for us. He is our Creator, Sustainer, Nurturer, and Cherisher. Remind students that the previous activities helped us identify the extent to which God sustains our existence, not just physically to keep our bodies alive, but also emotionally and intellectually. Therefore, we express gratitude toward God for sustaining every dimension of our existence by worshiping Him as He commanded us.

## Section 3



### Slide 11 / Worship: the choice between gratitude and ingratitude

- Proceed to **slide eleven** and read aloud the displayed verse and its translation. **76:3**
- Then, provide students with the following commentary on worship as an expression of gratitude:
  - This verse ends by contrasting two internal states: *shukr* (gratitude) and *kufir* (ingratitude).
  - Linguistically, *kufir* means to cover something up or to conceal it. A person who is ungrateful is called *kafir* because they deny God's many blessings. In other words, they do not give credit where credit is due (i.e., to God) and instead falsely give credit to the modern “gods” like the self, the universe, science, matter, and so on.
  - We concluded that we are indebted to God as our Rabb and Caretaker. However, in His wisdom, He does not compel us to worship Him, even though He has every right and ability to do so. Rather, as the verse indicates, He has given us a choice: either we can freely accept Him as our Rabb and express our gratitude to Him through worship, or we can deny that He is our Rabb and be ungrateful (i.e., *kafir*).
  - Regardless of whether we choose to be grateful or ungrateful creations of God, His status as our Rabb does not change. In other words, whether or not humanity worships God, we remain indebted to Him. Because we are indebted (whether we recognize it or not), His right to be worshiped is constantly present.
  - Conclude by recapping that while God does not need us or our worship, we should feel inclined to worship Him regardless, due to our indebtedness toward Him. Explain to students that, to understand His command to worship fully, we must ensure we understand all that the word “worship” entails.

### Teacher's note

This lesson uses a literal definition of the trilateral root *k-f-r*, and not the technical, theological definition to describe those outside the fold of Islam.

### Slide 12 / From worship to *ubudiyah*: a state of being

1. Proceed to **slide twelve**. Tell students that, when we think about worship and following God's commands, we often immediately think of ritualistic deeds, such as the five daily prayers or fasting in Ramadan. Inform students that "worship" is a much more all-encompassing term that goes beyond ritual acts of worship to include non-ritual deeds as well. For example, the prohibition from backbiting or consuming alcohol, and the command to treat parents kindly or help those in need, are not ritualistic in nature, but are still part of His commands and, therefore, part of worship if done intentionally.
2. Draw student attention to the definition of **worship** on the slide: "**acts undertaken with the intent of obeying God's commands (whether ritual or non-ritual); done out of indebtedness, gratitude, pursuit of God's pleasure, and so on.**"
  - a. **Optional extension:** To expand their understanding of the term, you may turn to the optional extension documents after completing this slide (**slide twelve**). The extension introduces students to a holistic definition of "worship" that applies to all aspects of human life, including both ritualistic and non-ritualistic forms of worship, involving the **human mind, body, and heart**. By the end, students will realize that holistic worship involves submitting to God in all aspects of one's life.
3. Next, explain to students that repeatedly performing acts or deeds of worship, both ritual and non-ritual, brings us to a state of being called ***ubudiyah***. Read aloud the definition of ***ubudiyah*** on the slide: **the resulting state of being that comes from a God-centered mindset in which every day actions (e.g., sleeping, eating, etc.) are transformed into acts of worship**. Explain that completely submitting to God and acting on His commands leads us to become true servants of God. In other words, it is the understanding that God's constant presence and involvement in our lives deserves a complete and wholehearted state of servitude.
4. Conclude by restating that while worship consists of individual deeds, ***ubudiyah*** describes a constant state of engaging in those deeds. This state comes about when we actively choose to worship God in all aspects of our lives. Emphasize for students that, while the choice of worshiping God is ours to make, it is we who inherently benefit from the decision to worship Him.

**From worship to *ubudiyah***  
a state of being

**Worship**: acts undertaken with the intent of obeying God's commands (whether ritual or non-ritual); done out of indebtedness, gratitude, pursuit of God's pleasure, and so on

**Ubudiyah**: the resulting state of being that comes from a God-centered mindset in which every day actions are transformed into acts of worship



### Teacher takeaway

At the start of the lesson, we reminded students that asking the question “Why does God ask us to worship Him?” is flawed because it projects anthropomorphic bias. This lesson provides students with an alternative question: “Why should we feel obligated to worship God?” Students begin by exploring the countless, intricate bodily processes necessary to sustain their existence. This, they realize, occurs independently of them. God facilitates these processes, making our existence entirely dependent on Him. Next, students are introduced to God’s name “Rabb,” the Creator and Sustainer who tirelessly cares for His creation and their every need. Students reflect personally on this name and consider times when they experienced His loving care in some aspect of their lives. The reflection on God’s status as Rabb culminates in acknowledging that we are indebted to God, and should thus express our gratitude to Him in the form of worship, especially constant, continuous worship or *ubudiyah*. By contrast, when we refuse to worship God, we are not simply disobeying Him but we are also failing to appreciate His blessings and fulfill His rights upon us. Turning away from worshiping God is the concept of *kufr* (concealing the blessings of God). When we understand that God is inherently worthy of gratitude, and that gratitude is expressed through worship, we can better appreciate God’s command to worship Him as both something He is entitled to demand, on the one hand, but also something He loves to see despite having no need of it (i.e., of our worship) on the other.

### Consolidation (5 min)

#### **Slide 13 / The choice to worship: we hear and we obey**

1. To conclude this lesson, proceed to [slide thirteen](#).
2. Begin by pointing out the title of this slide: “The choice to worship: we hear and we obey.”
3. Next, read aloud the displayed verse and its translation.  Explain that while God has the authority and right to command us to do anything, His actions are defined by His merciful nature; therefore, He only commands us to do what is ultimately beneficial for us. Even though God is affirming in this verse that His commands are for our own good, many students may still find it difficult to turn to God in wholehearted worship and gratitude.
4. Conclude this discussion by informing students that the upcoming lesson will remedy some of the barriers they may be feeling toward worship by exploring some of the benefits of worship, and how God’s places these benefits for us out of His infinite mercy. The lesson will explore how God loves to be worshiped and obeyed by His creation—not because He has a need for validation or servitude, but because He loves to see the benefit we, as His servants, achieve from it.

**The choice to worship**  
we hear and we obey



فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا  
“And whomsoever is guided, is guided only for the benefit of himself.”  
[Surat Yunus, 10:108]



فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ  
وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

“Whoever follows the right path follows it for his own good, and whoever strays does so to his own loss.”

[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

### God: the One worthy of worship

**Part I | The human body: a sixty-second overview**

Directions: Think about the following: what does it take for your body to stay alive for sixty seconds? While watching the video, fill in as many spaces as possible. After filling in the chart, circle or highlight 1-2 boxes that surprise you the most.

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Your body produces _____ red blood cells.              | You blink _____ times.                              | You release _____ liters of CO <sub>2</sub> .            |
| Your brain processes _____ bits of visual information. | _____ electrical signals pass between your neurons. | The strands of hair on your head grow _____ millimeters. |
| _____ liters of blood are filtered in your kidneys.    | You shed _____ dead skin cells.                     | Your mouth produces _____ ounces of saliva.              |
| Your body produces _____ watts of electricity.         | Your brain generates _____ unique thoughts.         | You inhale _____ times.                                  |

**Part II | Rabb: "He is with you wherever you are"**

Directions: Use the table to follow along with the explanation of each of God's names. Then, complete the journal prompt.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Al-Khalil   (The Creator)<br>Al-Razzaq   (the Provider)<br>Al-Muqeet   (the Sustainer) | He is constantly creating and maintaining the cells and biochemical processes that give us life, which manifests His name al-Khalil the Creator. Beyond the cellular level, He takes care of our bodies by providing us with nourishment, which physically sustains us. He is also al-Razzaq who provides us with the necessities of life.  |
| Al-Wadud   (Most Loving)<br>Al-Latif   (Gentle)<br>Al-Haruf   (Most Kind)              | God nurtures us beyond our physical functions. On an emotional level, God is the source of love, such as in the loving bond between a mother and child, making Him al-Wadud (the Most Loving). He is also al-Latif (the Subtlest Gentle). He is also al-Haruf (the Most Kind) who puts love in our hearts. He also cares for our intellect. For example, God is al-Aleem (the All-Knowing) and is the source of all human knowledge. We depend on God for our intellect, memory, and other mental faculties. This indicates that He preserves our intellect, memories, and other mental faculties, and preserves knowledge from one generation to the next. |
| Al-Aleem   (All-Knowing)<br>Al-Hakeem   (All-Wise)<br>Al-Hafeedh   (The Preserver)     |   |

2.1 God: the One worthy of worship

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

### God: the One worthy of worship

**teacher reference**

**Part I | The human body: a sixty-second overview**

Directions: Think about the following: what does it take for your body to stay alive for sixty seconds? While watching the video, fill in as many spaces as possible. After filling in the chart, circle or highlight 1-2 boxes that surprise you the most.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Your body produces <b>120 million</b> new red blood cells.          | You blink <b>15-20</b> times.                                   | You release <b>.006</b> liters of CO <sub>2</sub> .           |
| Your brain processes <b>600 million</b> bits of visual information. | <b>86 billion</b> electrical signals pass between your neurons. | The strands of hair on your head grow <b>.02</b> millimeters. |
| <b>1.3</b> liters of blood are filtered in your kidneys.            | You shed <b>30,000-50,000</b> dead skin cells.                  | Your mouth produces <b>.03</b> ounces of saliva.              |
| Your body produces <b>100</b> watts of electricity.                 | Your brain generates <b>80</b> unique thoughts.                 | You inhale <b>16</b> times.                                   |

2.1a Teacher reference

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

### The meaning of worship

**Brain dump:** What comes to mind when you hear the term "worship"? You may include a definition, synonyms, images, personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, memories, and so on.

**Worship**

Defining worship: As we explore a comprehensive definition of worship, use the table below to take notes:

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

2.2 The meaning of worship

## Stage 3: Assessments

### Formative assessment

1. To formatively assess the first objective, i.e., our obligatory worship of God arising from our indebtedness to Him as our Creator and Sustainer, students are asked a reflective question at the end of handout **2.1**. The instruction for this objective is found primarily on slides ten and eleven. If you would like to further assess this objective, you may add a quick activity at the end of slide eleven.

2. Students' personal reflections under the journal prompt on **2.1 (part two)** may be used to formatively assess the second objective. In the activity's set-up, students first learn about nine of God's divine names and how God manifests them in His constant care of our bodies, emotions, and intellects. Students then select one of His names and describe a time in which God acted directly in their lives through that name. Use the class-discussion after the journal prompt to gauge student appreciation for an involved God that oversees their daily affairs—from their bodily functions to their most cherished memories.

3. To formatively assess the objectives for the **optional extension**, ask students to submit their copy of **2.2 "The meaning of worship."** Review their responses to the brain dump activity, specifically how they personally defined "worship," and compare that to their written responses to questions 1-4 (question three, in particular, asks students to explain how their definition and understanding of "worship" evolved after the teacher instruction). Their mastery of the third objective may be demonstrated by their ability to define "worship" in a holistic way that includes the human heart, body, and mind.

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_ 

**Worship in action**  
**worship of the mind, body, and heart**

Step 1: Select

Look over the "worship bank" below.

Choose one act of worship from the list. You may choose something you are currently in the habit of doing, or challenge yourself by picking something outside of your daily or weekly practice.

**Worship bank**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend an Islamic program at your local mosque  | <input type="checkbox"/> Approach someone you have hurt recently and apologize              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice 10-15 min of dhikr   | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend 10-15 min making du'a in secret for your family and friends  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fast voluntarily with someone in your household   | <input type="checkbox"/> Find an interesting fact about a rare species and journal about it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend 10-15 min helping someone with a chore or task (e.g., cleaning, grocery shopping) | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend an afternoon at a nearby park and pick up any litter you see |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call a relative you have lost touch with and reconnect with them (safar al-roham)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Check up on a friend or relative who is struggling with something  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray one extra sunnah prayer  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend 10-15 min talking to your parents about their day            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share an Islamic video with a friend or family member & discuss it together             | <input type="checkbox"/> Donate any amount of money to a cause of your choice               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send a kind message to someone you recently fought or had a disagreement with           | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer for an afternoon at a shelter or senior retirement home  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Share a meal with someone who often eats alone  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend 10-15 min making du'a for the oppressed                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abstain from arguing with someone who annoys you  | <input type="checkbox"/> volunteer to babysit for someone                                   |

2.3 Worship in action

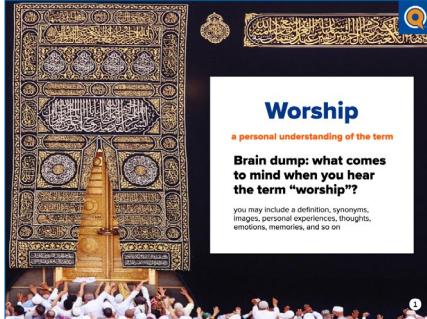
### Summative assessment (optional extension)

At the end of the optional extension, pass out copies of **2.3 "Worship in action"** to students. This assignment requires them to choose one act of worship from a "worship bank," and to then engage their hearts, bodies, and minds in that act of worship. After practicing their act of worship, students are asked to recall that God commands us to worship Him, not for His benefit, but for ours. It is from His love and compassion toward His creation that He endowed all of His commands with the potential to benefit us in this world and the next. Part three of this assignment asks students to speculate on the specific ways the act of worship they practiced can benefit them personally. The purpose of this assignment is two-fold: first, it serves as an assessment for this lesson's optional (third) objective, "Students will be able to understand the meaning of worship as it relates to the mind, body, and heart." Second, it prompts students to begin thinking about the subject of the upcoming lesson on the benefits we procure from worshiping God.

## Optional extension

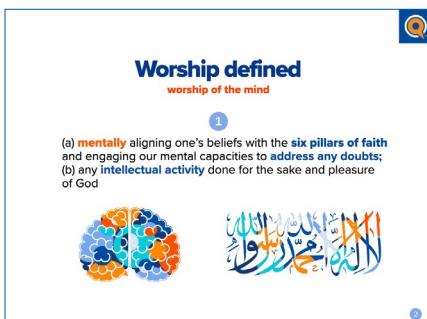
### Section 2 (Slides 1-7)

#### Slide 1 / Worship: a personal understanding of the term



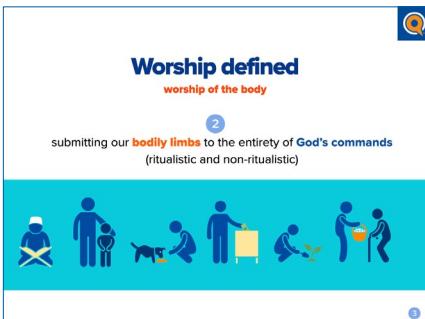
1. Proceed to **slide one** and pass out copies of **2.2 “The meaning of worship.”** To begin defining “worship,” students will first explore their own understanding of the term.
2. Set a timer for 2-3 minutes and instruct students to use the blank table on **2.2** to do a “brain dump.” Provide them with the following prompt: **“What comes to mind when you hear ‘worship?’”** Encourage them to think of a definition they would give for worship, as well as any synonyms, images, personal experiences, thoughts, emotions, and memories that come to mind when they hear the term. Explain that this is a personal activity that requires honesty and transparency as they reflect on what “worship” means.
3. After 2-3 minutes have passed, call on a few students to share their notes from their brain dump, beginning first with their personal definitions. Some students may have identified worship to be ritual acts such as fasting, performing five daily prayers, or going on hajj. Others may have used words that indicate a recognition of a deeper definition of worship that connects back to their personal relationship with God.
4. Inform students that the upcoming section will explore a holistic definition of worship that comprises all dimensions of the human self: mind, body, and heart.

#### Slide 2 / Worship defined: submission of the mind



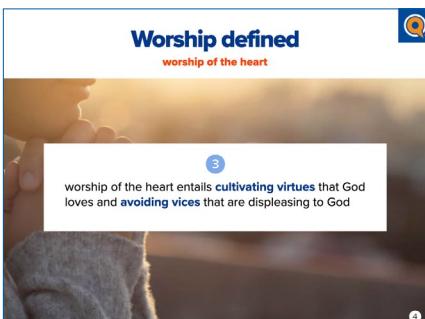
1. Proceed to **slide two** and instruct students to take notes on their copy of **2.2** as you go through the following three slides. Remind students that, when we think of worship, we often immediately think of the ritualistic aspects. However, for each component of worship that the following slides explore, there are both ritualistic and non-ritualistic aspects. Instruct students to keep track of both kinds of worship. By including both aspects in our understanding of worship, students will come to have a more holistic definition of what “worship” truly is.
2. Next, inform students that the first component of worship is to believe that we are God’s creation. Worship on the cognitive level entails **mentally aligning one’s beliefs with the six pillars of faith**. This means accepting God, His messengers, His books, the angels, the Last Day, and divine decree. It also requires that we actively learn about God’s nature, who the Prophet ﷺ was, and so on, in order to increase our conviction and belief in the pillars of faith. It is important to note that mentally submitting oneself to belief is not a passive act, like checking off the boxes of the six pillars of faith (*iman*). Rather, it is actively internalizing them so that they form the lens through which we process the world around us. It also includes **engaging our mental capacities to address any doubts** we may have. For example, if we are unsure of certain aspects of the unseen world (e.g., resurrection, existence of angels, etc.), worship of the mind means seeking knowledge or asking scholars who can answer our questions. Doing so strengthens our degree of submission to God and constitutes “worship of the mind.”

- Inform students that the previous examples were clear instances of worship of the mind. It is obvious how reflecting on God's attributes or learning about the proofs of prophethood are connected to cognitive worship. However, worship of the mind encompasses **any intellectual activity done for the sake and pleasure of God**. For example, critically thinking about current events, contemplating the consequences of one's actions, or using one's mind and intellect to reflect on nature and the cosmos can be considered worship of the mind. These acts are non-ritualistic or non-theological in nature, but, with the right intention, can count as worship if they bring a person closer to God.



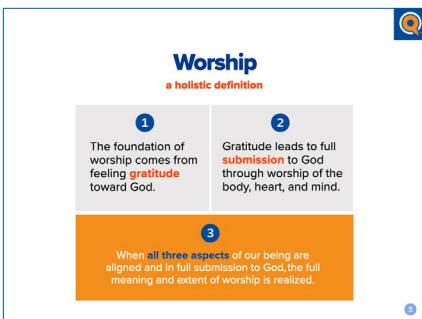
### **Slide 3 / Worship defined: submission of the body**

- Proceed to **slide three**. Inform students that the next component of worship requires **submission of our bodies (and limbs) to the entirety of God's commands**. As with worship of the mind, this type of worship also encompasses both ritual and non-ritual acts. The ritual acts of worship include fasting, performing hajj, or praying. However, physical worship goes beyond rituals to include non-ritualistic actions such as: serving our parents and elders, feeding animals, lowering our gaze, dressing modestly, etc.
- Tell students to refer back to the brain dump around "worship." Point out that they may have noticed that many of the actions they mentioned were physical rituals. Explain that without a proper perspective and framework, these actions can become robotic, losing meaning and purpose. It is not until we align these actions with the mind and heart that they begin to take on a higher level of significance.
- Continue to explain that, as mentioned earlier, we have the choice of submitting to God's command through our limbs and mind either earnestly and in a state of contentment, or reluctantly and begrudgingly. After submission of the mind and body, we move to the understanding of submission of the heart which will ultimately help us achieve a comprehensive state of worship.



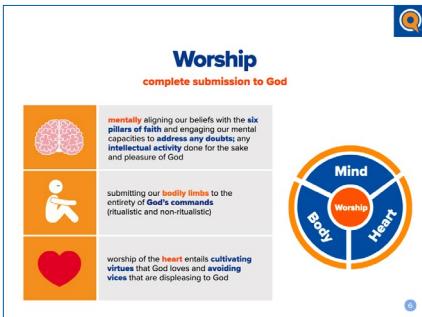
### **Slide 4 / Worship defined: submission of the heart**

- Proceed to **slide four**. Inform students that the final component of our definition of worship encompasses the heart. Worship of the heart entails **cultivating virtues that God loves and avoiding vices that are displeasing to Him**. Use the following commentary to elaborate:
  - When we know that God is aware of our emotional states, feelings, and the virtues and vices in our hearts, we strive to purify our heart from anything that displeases Him. For example, if we are envious of someone and harbor negative feelings towards them, submission of the heart entails striving to rid ourselves of the feelings of envy, enmity, and contempt for a fellow brother or sister.
  - In many ways, worship of the heart is the highest form of worship because it requires maintaining the awareness that God is watchful of our inner life, as much as He is aware of our speech and actions. It means striving to become constantly aware of God's presence and knowledge of even the most fleeting thoughts and feelings that cross our hearts.



### Slide 5 / Worship: a holistic definition

1. Proceed to **slide five** and read aloud the three points on the slide:
  - a. The foundation of worship comes from feeling gratitude toward God.
  - b. Gratitude leads to full submission to God through worship of the body, heart, and mind.
  - c. When all three aspects of our being are aligned and in full submission to God, the full meaning and extent of worship is realized.



### Slide 6 / Worship: complete submission to God

1. Proceed to **slide six**. Briefly review all the components of worship that students just reviewed in the previous slides.
2. Draw student attention to the diagram on the right that represents a complete state of submission to God. Highlight the relationship between the three components of worship by explaining that a deficiency in any one of its components leads to deficiency in the other. At the same time, deepening any one of the components of worship deepens the others. For example, if a person is physically submitting their body to the movements of prayer, but their mind and heart are not connected, their prayer will be deficient. But if a person performs prayer engaging all three components, their prayer will be deepened and more meaningful. By understanding how all-encompassing worship truly is, a person can go beyond physical, ritualistic movements; instead, they will be able to create a meaningful relationship with their Creator.
3. Next, give students a few minutes to respond to the final questions on **2.2**. Then, use the sample responses below to facilitate a concluding discussion:
  - a. How does an understanding of worship of the heart, body, and mind enhance your overall appreciation of God's command to worship Him?
 

Students should articulate an understanding that worship is more than individual deeds performed in isolation from each other. First, by knowing how the heart, body, and mind interact and relate to each other, a person's experience of worship becomes more beneficial and impactful. Second, by understanding that worship includes ritual and non-ritualistic elements, a person can be encouraged to transform mundane acts into acts of worship through the intention of following God's commands in all aspects and avenues of life, not simply when one is on a prayer mat or during the month of Ramadan.
  - b. Do you have barriers that make it difficult to worship God with your mind, body, and heart?
 

Students should be encouraged to share barriers that make it difficult for them to worship wholeheartedly, which can be different for every individual. A **barrier of the body**, for example, could be the physical exhaustion a person feels that causes them to miss Fajr prayer, or the caffeine dependence or migraines that make fasting in Ramadan difficult. A **barrier of the mind** could be a doubt they have not resolved about an aspect of the Islamic tradition. Lastly, a **barrier of the heart** could be a disease of the heart like arrogance that prevents a person from turning to God in a state of humility. Once we have a good opinion of God and

### Teacher's note

You may choose to supplement students' understanding of the term worship by including this optional homework assignment as a summative assessment. When handing out the worksheets, give students a moment to glance over the acts in the worship bank and choose their act of worship before leaving the class. Ensure that the class as a whole chooses a variety of acts (e.g., instruct students that no more than 1-2 students may select each act). Also, give students an opportunity to express any surprise they may feel at some of the examples. At first glance, they might not understand how some acts (e.g., "Share a meal with someone who eats alone") constitute worship. If so, remind them of the expanded notion of worship they learned in the optional extension. The purpose of this assignment is to challenge students to see how everyday acts can become acts of worship.

believe that, out of His love for us, He only wants what is best for His creation, we can dismantle the barriers that prevent us from completely submitting to Him.

- c. Revisit your notes from the "brain dump" at the start of the lesson. How has your definition of worship evolved?

After glancing at their "brain dump" from the beginning of this section, students may notice a difference in their understanding of "worship." Their evolved definition should **move beyond ritual aspects** of worship and encompass an understanding that "worship" is a **holistic act** of the mind, body, and heart.

4. As students complete the final reflection questions on **2.2**, pass out copies of handout **2.3 "Worship in action"** to the class. 

### Teacher takeaway

Many have the understanding that worship consists of mechanical rituals performed by the limbs. The optional extension challenges this understanding by breaking down the term and defining worship comprehensively as submission of the mind, body, and heart. Doing so helps highlight that true worship can bring a person to a higher level of consciousness of God. It allows them to realize how all-encompassing worship can be with the correct intention. Once we break down worship into worship of the mind, body, and heart, we can then recognize and accept our status as created beings and servants of God, who knows of every deed of the mind, body, and heart. This acceptance naturally leads to the wish to obey and serve Him and pursue His pleasure, exhausting every effort to worship Him and seek nearness to Him.



Instructions and activities

**Lesson 1**

**Lesson 2**

***Lesson 3 • God's mercy  
and human benefit***



## Essential questions

What are the benefits of submitting yourself to God?

## Lesson plan 3

# God's mercy and human benefit

## Stage 1: Big ideas and desired results

### Lesson overview

In this final lesson plan, we wrap up the unit by reflecting on how God's demand for worship arises from His compassionate regard for our well-being and benefit. Students reevaluate what "benefit" means to first recognize that modern society often defines something as beneficial when it is self-serving and/or provides instant gratification. Students are then invited to reflect on how true benefit is that which brings both individual and collective good in this world and in the next. By examining a few concrete examples, students will come to recognize that every command God has given us is in fact a means for our benefit and a reflection of His love and mercy. The personal fulfillment and the communal cohesion that comes out of worship will give students the insight to recognize that it is not God, but in fact us humans, who need and benefit from worship.

### Learning objectives

Toward the completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- ① Analyze the many benefits of worship and submitting oneself to God (through rituals and non-rituals). (*cognitive*)
- ② Appreciate that while God has the power to do whatever He wants, His commands reflect His compassionate regard for the well-being and benefit of His servants. (*affective*)

## Stage 2: Learning plan

Total time: 60 min

### Lesson plan outline

- Section 1, **slides 1-3**: recapping main ideas of lessons one and two and previewing the lesson to come
- Section 2, **slides 4-11**: expanding our notion of “benefit” and exploring the question “what’s in it for me?” by charting the multi-dimensional benefits of worship
- Section 3, **slides 12-15**: reflecting on God’s mercy in making worship inherently beneficial for us

### Supplies/equipment

- Lesson plan 3 presentation (for teacher)
- Projector/screen/computer/internet connection to display presentation
- Printouts of **3.1** (one per student)
- Printouts of **3.3** (cut into three strips, one strip per student)
- Printout of **3.4** (one for teacher)
- Strips of paper (one-inch thick, three per student)

Supplies for group activity:

- Printouts of **3.2a-d** 
- Blank poster boards (one per group)
- Markers (3-5 per group)
- Rulers (one per group)
- Post-it notes (one stack per group)

## Learning activity

### Opening activity (10 min)

#### Section 1

##### **Slides 1-2 / Recap and connect**

- Open the lesson three presentation and go to **slide one**. Help students recall the main ideas of lessons one and two by facilitating the following opening activity, “Paper chain of main ideas.”

- First, pass out three strips of paper to each student.
- Next, instruct them to record the main ideas of lessons one and two on two of the strips of paper. They should keep the third strip blank until the end of this lesson. To help jog their memory of the previous lessons, provide them with the following prompts:

**Lesson 1 prompt:** What is problematic about the question “Why does God ask us to worship Him”?

**Lesson 2 prompt:** Why should we worship God, given that He doesn’t need or benefit from our worship?

- Give students a few minutes to complete this task.
- Once they are finished writing, transition to **slide two** to provide students with a formal recap of the previous two lessons. Read aloud the text on the slide: “The question ‘Why does God ask us to worship Him?’ is problematic because it presumes that God acts out of need, like humans. God does not need or benefit from our worship. Instead, we worship Him out of our indebtedness to Him, our Creator and Sustainer.”

### Teacher's note

This lesson contains a group project where students will get into groups of four and explore the benefits of a specific command of God. There are four commands total (a, b, c, and d, with d being optional). To prepare for this lesson, print out copies of **3.2a**, **3.2b**, **3.2c**, and **3.2d**. Ensure that each student has their own copy of their respective handout (e.g., each individual student in **3.2a** should have their own copy of **3.2a “Fruits of worship”**). To facilitate the activity, groups should ideally have 2-4 students per group. For large classrooms, you may assign more than one group to the same act of worship to ensure the groups remain manageable.

### Recap | Paper chain of main ideas

• Need: 3 strips of paper; a writing utensil

• Do: Record the **main ideas** of lesson one and lesson two on two separate strips of paper. Keep the third strip blank until the end of this lesson.

○ Lesson 1 prompt: What is problematic about the question: “Why does God ask us to worship Him?”

○ Lesson 2 prompt: Why should we worship God, given that He doesn’t need or benefit from our worship?

• Next: Put away your strips of paper. You will build a paper chain with them at the end of this lesson.



The question “Why does God ask us to worship Him?” is problematic because it presumes that God acts out of need, like humans.

God does not need or benefit from our worship. Instead, we worship Him out of our indebtedness to Him as our Creator and Sustainer.





### Teacher's note

Consider making "Our legacy" into an ongoing activity for the rest of the day or week. You may reserve a spot on the wall or bulletin board for the "Legacy wall." Allow students to add to their posts and read their classmates' responses as they continue to think about this theme.



مَنْ أَهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ  
وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

"Whoever follows the right path follows it **for his own benefit**, and whoever strays does so to his own loss."  
[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

### Let's talk "benefit"

"Whoever follows the right path follows it **for his own benefit**, and whoever strays does so to his own loss."  
[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

**Turn & talk:**  
What does it mean to "benefit" from something?

**"Benefit" is not necessarily that which**

- gives me instant gratification
- makes me happy
- is easiest and most comfortable
- serves myself only
- feels good at the moment

- Give students a moment to assess their own responses in light of the recap above. Then, instruct them to put away their strips of paper because they will build a paper chain with them at the end of this lesson.

### Slide 3 / "What's in it for me?": wondering about the benefits of worship

- Proceed to **slide three** to introduce students to the theme of this final lesson. Tell students that being committed to worship is a lifelong effort to align our hearts, bodies, and minds to God's commands, especially when it feels heavy and inconvenient. In that struggle, we may wonder, "**What's in it for me?**" In other words, **how do we personally benefit from worship?**
- Next, circle the term "benefit" on the slide (or write it on a separate board for the whole class to see) and explain to students that inquiring about the benefits of worship isn't to put conditions and stipulations upon God. We don't worship only if we are presented with a tangible, measurable benefit, e.g., observing Ramadan only if there is scientific literature published on the benefits of fasting, or abstaining from alcohol only if we have scientific data on its physical and societal harms. Such an attitude undermines the essence of worship, which is humility and submission before God, even when it doesn't make sense or it feels burdensome. As the beneficiaries of worship, we must remember that the benefits are not the reason we worship God, but rather, the byproducts and blessings He places in worship to incentivize worship for us.

- After stating the disclaimer above, continue to the next section where you will help students redefine and expand the term "benefit" and explore its connection to God's specific commands to worship.

### Section 2

#### Slides 4-6 / Let's talk about "benefit": how do we understand this term?

- Proceed to **slide four** and read aloud the displayed verse and its translation. Explain that God reaffirms in this verse that His command for us to worship Him, and all of what that worship entails, ultimately benefits us.
- Once again, redirect students to the term "benefit" and ask them to think deeply about how they personally understand the term. Give students a few minutes to complete the following "turn & talk" with an elbow partner: **"What does it mean to 'benefit' from something?"**
- Once a few minutes have passed, regroup as a whole class and call on a few students to share their responses. As students share, tell them to keep track of how their peers define the term "benefit": are they focusing on what brings them instant gratification and pleasure, what makes them feel happy, or on what renders long-term positive impact, even if it is uncomfortable in the moment? Are they focusing on what benefits them individually, or what also benefits their family, friends, and communities at large? Propel the class conversation by asking students these follow-up questions to get them thinking about the various dimensions and depths of benefit.
- Next, continue to **slide five**. Emphasize to students that when God says that the path to Him benefits us, we may on occasion be skeptical because we have our own myopic and limited definitions of "benefit."

5. To challenge some of our contemporary notions of “benefit,” read aloud the text on the slide: “‘Benefit’ is *not necessarily* that which...

- a. gives me instant gratification
- b. makes me happy
- c. is easiest and most comfortable
- d. serves myself only
- e. feels good at the moment”

6. Tell students that though our society encourages us to pursue whatever maximizes our individual happiness in the now, this pursuit may not necessarily lead us to what is beneficial—especially in the long-term and for our families and societies at large. Therefore, we must enter into this exploration of the benefits of worship to gain a deeper understanding of the term “benefit”—one that goes beyond our momentary individual desires.



7. Transition to **slide six** to help students expand their understanding of the term “benefit.” Emphasize that we cannot recognize and appreciate the benefits God has embedded in His commands to worship without taking into account the multidimensional nature of those benefits. Doing so will allow us to form a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the term.

8. Read aloud the types of benefit we experience from worship:

- a. **Short-term (dunya) benefits:** benefits that you experience in the moment the act is undertaken
- b. **Long-term (dunya) benefits:** benefits you experience over time after committing to an act for the long-run and making it a habitual practice
- c. **Hereafter (akhirah) benefits:** benefits that you experience after your death (in the grave, on the Day of Resurrection, and the two abodes)
- d. **Societal benefits:** benefits that are experienced by at least one other person around you (e.g., family, friend, neighbor) or to the society/ummah at large

9. After providing the commentary above, tell students that an act that renders multiple dimensions of benefit is far better than an act that only benefits one person in the now.

10. Recap the discussion for this slide by emphasizing to students that “benefit” is multidimensional and encompasses far more than our immediate, individual desires. This is why it is critical to understand the multiple kinds of benefits, so that we do not automatically think only of the benefits that are most obvious (i.e., individual, short-term). Rather, our conception of “benefit” should include our wellbeing over the course of our lifetimes, as well as in the hereafter. It should also move beyond the scope of the individual to include the society at large. In other words, when we think of “benefit” we should not jump to thinking only about the *dunya*, but, more importantly, we should train ourselves to think even more so about the *akhirah* (hereafter).



### Teacher takeaway

This section begins by reviewing essential concepts from the previous lessons (anthropomorphism and indebtedness), which lay the foundation for the core discussion in this lesson. Students then reflect on how they define “benefit” and the ways in which human beings are motivated by their own self interests. The following discussion encourages students to critically reexamine their understanding of “benefit” to ensure that it is not limited to short-term benefits, but also includes long-term, societal, and hereafter benefits. In this way, students come to have a broader scope and appreciation of the word “benefit.”

**Slide 7:** "What's in it for me?"

A yellow caution sign on a post reads: "CAUTION PROCEED WITH HUMILITY". Below it, the text "What's in it for me?" is displayed. A callout asks: "In other words, how do I personally benefit from worship?"

**Slide 8:** "What's in it for me?" | charting the benefits of worship

A graph titled "Charting the Benefits of Worship" shows four categories (A, B, C, D) plotted against time (short-term, long-term) and scope (individual, societal). A callout box contains a command from Surat al-Baqarah, 2:267: "Command: voluntarily giving in charity. 'You who believe, give charitably from the good things you have acquired and what your parents produced for you from the Earth.' [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:267]".

### Teacher's note

This modeling activity serves as an example of the proper mindset students should utilize when they analyze the benefits of worship.

### Slides 7-9 / "What's in it for me?": charting the benefits of worship (teacher modeling and student activity)

- Now that they have a more nuanced understanding of the term “benefit,” proceed to **slide seven** and remind students of this lesson’s central question: **“What’s in it for me?”** In other words, **“How do I personally benefit from worship?”**
- Continue to **slide eight** and pass out copies of **3.1 “Charting benefits.”** Tell students that, as a whole class, you will now analyze the benefits of **voluntarily giving in charity**. Instruct them to carefully follow along on **3.1** so that they can recreate their own graphs for a different act of worship in an upcoming group activity.
- To begin, read aloud the translated verse displayed on the slide. Tell students that, as an act of worship, we are commanded by God to give freely of the good we acquire (e.g., wealth and possessions). The act of giving charity ultimately benefits us, both on an individual and societal level, in the short-term, long-term, and hereafter as well.
- Next, chart the benefits by going through each letter of the graph and providing students with the correlating commentary (students may follow along on **3.1**):
  - Individual, short-term:** Neuroscience studies have established that when a person willingly gives in charity, two pleasure centers of their brain become activated: first is the mesolimbic pathway, which distributes the feel-good chemical, dopamine, and the second is the subgenual area of the brain which helps formulate social attachment. In short, giving in charity uplifts a person’s mood, wards off feelings of isolation and loneliness, and cultivates a sense of togetherness with their community at large.<sup>1</sup>
  - Individual, long-term:** Giving in charity also helps curb a person’s greed and attachment to money and material possessions, ultimately reminding them that they and their wealth belong to God, and to Him they will return.<sup>2</sup> Giving in charity reorients a person to their purpose in life and reminds them of the fleeting nature of the world. Also, according to the prophetic tradition, giving in charity will stand in the way of future calamity<sup>3</sup> and cleanse their wealth of impurities.
  - Individual, hereafter:** The eternal benefits of giving in charity are many. It extinguishes a person’s sins just as water extinguishes fire.<sup>4</sup> It also includes earning God’s pleasure,<sup>5</sup> being shaded by one’s charity on the Day of Resurrection,<sup>6</sup> entering Paradise from the Gate of al-Sadaqah



يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ طَيَّبَاتٍ  
وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَنْمِمُوا إِلَيْهِ  
مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِإِخْرَاجِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُعْمَلُوا فِيهِ  
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَنِّي حَمِيدٌ

"You who believe, give charitably from the good things you have acquired and that We have produced for you from the earth. Do not give away the bad things that you yourself would only accept with your eyes closed: remember that God is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise."

[Surat al-Baqarah, 2:267]

| Group | Command (to perform or abstain from)                              |
|-------|---|
| A     | performing the five daily prayers (salah)                         |
| B     | spreading the Islamic greeting of peace (salam)                   |
| C     | abstaining from marijuana (mind-altering/intoxicating substances) |
| D     | lowering one's gaze (abstaining from pornography)                 |

Legend:  = ritual  = non-ritual

#### Teacher's note

The four acts of worship were chosen in order to provide students with a range of ritual and non-ritual commands and prohibitions. Groups A and B explore examples of things we must perform, while Group C (and the optional Group D) explore things we are commanded to abstain from. And with the exception of Group A, all groups explore non-ritual acts.

**Activity disclaimer:** Group D explores the command to lower one's gaze and abstain from pornography. It is optional and intended for **mature students** only. If some students choose this subject matter, be aware that it contains sexually explicit language on porn consumption and porn addiction. It also contains sensitive content that some students may find difficult, including the stories of survivors of rape, human sex trafficking, and sexual violence. Use your discretion.

(in honor and recognition of one's generosity),<sup>7</sup> and receiving multiplied reward for every penny they spent.<sup>8</sup>

- d. **Societal:** When a person gives in charity, they fulfill some basic needs of their fellow brothers and sisters in humanity. They help clothe a poor person's nakedness, relieve their hunger pangs, provide them with shelter, protect them from harm, and/or provide them with other needed services. Their charity also prevents wealth from concentrating and circulating solely among the rich and, instead, shares their wealth across all socio-economic classes, thus helping to create a more equitable society.<sup>9</sup>

5. Now that modeling for students is complete, and they have seen how to "chart the benefits" of a particular act of worship, inform the class that they will now complete a group activity in which they analyze and chart the benefits of another act of worship.
6. Proceed to **slide nine** to set up the activity.
7. Begin by dividing the class into four groups and read aloud their assigned act of worship: **A** performing the five daily prayers (*salah*), **B** spreading the Islamic greeting of peace (*salam*), **C** abstaining from marijuana (mind-altering, intoxicating substances), and **D** lowering one's gaze (abstaining from pornography).
8. Next, pass out copies of handout **3.2(a-d) "What's in it for me?"** Be sure that each student receives a copy of the handout that matches his or her assigned act of worship.
9. Briefly explain the following:
  - a. In this unit, we defined "worship" as "acts undertaken with the intent of obeying God's commands (i.e., commands to perform or abstain from an act.)"
  - b. Furthermore, "worship" is all-encompassing. It includes rituals (such as the daily prayers, fasting in Ramadan, etc.) and non-rituals (greeting your fellow Muslims, maintaining proper hygiene, seeking knowledge, etc.).
10. Next, inform students of their task (**3.2**): "With your group, you are going to dive deep into the various benefits embedded in God's command to worship. Once you have collected and categorized your information, your group will create a visual (mirroring the graph on **3.1**) titled 'Charting benefits.'"
11. Then, direct students to their supplies. They will need to find three other classmates from within their assigned letter group, a blank poster board, some markers, a ruler, and a stack of post-it notes (for recording the benefits of their assigned act of worship).

- Once students are set to begin, give students 2-3 minutes to look over the rubric at the end of their handouts. Allow students to ask any questions and clarify expectations before they begin the activity.
- When the groups are ready to start the activity, set the timer to **25 minutes**. Tell students to read, watch, and reflect on the resources provided on their handout to uncover the benefits of worshiping God—i.e., performing what He commands of ritual and non-ritual acts, and abstaining from what He prohibits—on an individual level and societal level, in the short-term, long-term, and hereafter. Inform students that when finished, they will present their research on their poster boards to the rest of the class.

**Gallery walk**

**Directions:** Read question one from your slip of paper (3.3). With your group and your slip of paper in hand, silently walk around the room to view each of the displayed poster boards. Spend a minute at each poster board, reading the information and reflecting on the benefits that resonate with you the most.

Be prepared to share your reflections with the whole class.

#### Teacher's note

Instruct students to focus on question one on **3.3** during the gallery walk. Question two will be addressed in later slides.

#### Slide 10 / Gallery walk: students present their projects

- Once time is up, proceed to **slide ten**. Instruct each group to set up their poster boards around the corners of the room. While they are doing so, give each student a slip from **3.3 “Benefits reflections.”** The prompts on **3.3** will frame the gallery walk and class discussion that will follow.
- While students are still standing, read aloud the gallery walk directions displayed on the slide: “Read **question one** on your slip of paper (**3.3**). With your group and your slip of paper in hand, silently walk around the room to view each of the displayed poster boards. Spend a minute at each poster board, reading the information and reflecting on the benefits that resonate with you the most. Be prepared to share your reflections with the whole class.”
- After students complete the silent gallery walk, invite them back to their seats to record their answers to **question one** on **3.3** in preparation for a whole-class discussion.

#### Slide 11 / Class-discussion: students share their reflections

- Transition to **slide eleven** and tell students that they are going to go around the room and share some of their responses to **question one** in the following handout (**3.3**):
  - Share **1-2 charted benefits** from you/your classmates’ poster boards that resonated with you most during the gallery walk.
  - To enrich the discussion, push students to consider how many of God’s specific commands fulfill our needs holistically and safeguard us from potential harms. Use the notes on **3.4 “Fruits of worship: teacher’s reference”** to fill the gaps where students fall short.
  - Once all students have had a chance to share, and you supplemented the conversation with notes from **3.4**, continue to the next section. Instruct students to keep their handout close by (**3.3**) for the remaining slides.

**Class discussion**

**1** Share 1-2 benefits from you or your classmates’ poster boards that resonated with you most during the gallery walk.



### Teacher takeaway

In this section, students divide into groups to explore in detail four concrete examples of worshiping God and following His commands. Each group explores a variety of multimedia sources (e.g., videos, blogs and articles, scientific statistics, etc.) to investigate the benefits of their chosen act of worship from a number of angles. Not only do students consider short-term benefits for the individual, but long-term benefits for individuals and societies as a whole. Students chart these benefits in the graph from the previous section, then present their posters to the rest of the class in a silent wall gallery. As they view the findings of other groups, they reflect on the many benefits of worshiping God, and explore their own feelings at the realization that God has placed so much benefit for His creation in His divine commands.

## Section 3



وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الْأَرْحَمَةِ إِن يَشَاءُ يُذْهِبُكُمْ  
وَيَسْتَحْلِفُ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ

"Your Lord is **Self-Sufficient and full of mercy**. If He pleased, He could do away with you and replace you with whoever He wills." [Surat al-An'am, 6:133]



مَا يَنْعَلِمُ اللَّهُ بِعَدِيلُكُمْ إِن شَكَرُوكُمْ وَآتَنْتُمْ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلَيْمًا

"Why should Allah punish you if you are grateful and faithful? Allah is **Ever Appreciative, All-Knowing.**" [Surat al-Nisa, 4:147]

### Slides 12-14 / God's Mercy: conclusion and final thoughts

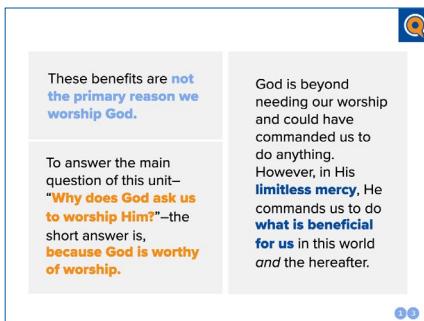
- Proceed to **slide twelve** and tell students that, along with their group members, they charted just some benefits of worshiping God as He commanded. God alone knows the full wisdom behind His commands and the benefits He embedded in them, so any wisdom we can uncover or benefit we experience is just the tip of the iceberg compared to God's knowledge.
- Next, read aloud the displayed verse **on the left** and its translation.  Then, provide students with the following commentary:
  - Point to the word "al-Ghani" (the Self-Sufficient) and inform students that this name reminds us that God is free of need: He has no need for us whatsoever—neither our existence nor our worship. In fact, as the verse states, God can remove us entirely if He wills.
- Next, read the second verse on the left.  Make the following points to the class:
  - This verse can be contrasted with the first one. The verse on the left informs us that God has absolutely no need of our worship, but nevertheless He commands us to worship Him and even appreciates our worship. This is what His name "Al-Shakur" (The Appreciative One) means. Moreover, He is "Al-Aleem" (The all-Knowing), which indicates He is aware of even the smallest deed of worship.
- Ask students if they think these two verses seem to suggest any kind of paradox. You may prompt them by asking: "If God does not need our worship, why is He appreciative of it?" Call on 1-2 students to share their thoughts.
  - Students may express sentiments such as: God is our Creator and the One who sustains and nourishes us, which are signs of His love. He therefore appreciates everything we do to please Him.
- As students share their thoughts, you may drive the point further by providing them with the following example:
  - God appreciates our worship even if He does not need it, just like a parent would appreciate a card or craft that their child makes for them, even though it is the parents themselves who provided all the materials and supplies for them to do so. Even a person can appreciate something without being in need of it, and this example pales next to God's generosity and appreciativeness.

6. After hearing from some students, suggest to them that the answer to this question lies in the first verse. Point to the phrase “*Dhul-Rahmah*” (the One full of mercy) in the verse on the left. Explain to students the following points:

- a. An essential attribute of God is His mercy. It is out of His mercy that He appreciates our striving for something He does not need (i.e., our worship), but which, in reality, we need. In other words, if we understand who God truly is and how boundless His mercy is, we come to realize that it is from His mercy that He **motivates us to worship** Him by placing innumerable benefits in it.
- b. Whenever we find ourselves experiencing the benefits of worship (e.g., the peace and calmness of prayer, strong social bonds from spreading *salam*, a clear intellect free from the effects of drugs, or satisfying intimacy in marriage unharmed by pornography), we must remind ourselves that these benefits are a manifestation of **God’s loving mercy upon us**.
- c. It is also out of God’s mercy that He is appreciative not only of the outcomes of our worship, but the **process and struggle** it takes to fulfill His commands. Draw students’ attention to the divine name “Al-Aleem” (The all-Knowing). This means that, no matter how difficult it is to carry out good deeds and abstain from bad ones, God is all-Knowing of our efforts. He is intimately aware of the obstacles we face and He rewards us for simply trying. When we struggle to get up for prayer, or to keep our gaze lowered, or to avoid people who are a bad influence and instead seek out good company, remember that God is all-Aware and all-Appreciative. 

7. Continue to **slide thirteen** and read aloud the displayed text: “**These benefits are not the primary reason we worship God** and follow His commands. Rather, to answer the main question of this unit—“**Why does God ask us to worship Him?**”—the short answer is, **because God is worthy of worship**. God is beyond needing our worship and could have commanded us to do anything. However, in His **limitless mercy**, He commands us to do **what is beneficial for us** in this world and the hereafter.”

8. Go to **slide fourteen** and direct student attention to **question two** from their handout (**3.3 “Benefits reflection”**). Read out the question, also displayed on the slide: “How do you feel knowing that God has embedded these benefits for you in His commands to worship when He didn’t have to?” Give students 2-3 minutes to record their answer on their paper slips (**3.3**).



This slide shows a handout titled "3.3 Benefits reflection". It contains two columns of text. The left column reads: "These benefits are not the primary reason we worship God." The right column reads: "God is beyond needing our worship and could have commanded us to do anything. However, in His limitless mercy, He commands us to do what is beneficial for us in this world and the hereafter." There are small decorative icons at the bottom right of each column.



This slide shows a handout titled "3.3 Benefits reflection". It features a photograph of a small bottle with a cork and two red heart-shaped stones on a surface. To the right of the photo is a box containing the text: "Final thoughts" and "How do you feel knowing that God has embedded these benefits for you in His commands to worship when He didn't have to?". A small number "2" is in a red circle at the bottom left of the box.

**Consolidate | Paper chain of main ideas**

- **Need:** 3 strips of paper and a writing utensil
- **Do:** Record the **main idea** of lesson three on your final strip of paper.
- **Lesson 3 prompt:** "How is God's command to worship Him a reflection of His love and compassion?"
- **Next:** Create a paper chain by forming each strip into a ring and stapling them together.

## Consolidation

### Slide 15 / Paper chain of main ideas

1. To conclude the lesson and the unit as a whole, proceed to **slide fifteen** for the final consolidation.
2. Instruct students to pull out the paper chain (i.e., the three strips of paper) they began building at the start of the lesson. Then, tell students to record the main idea of this final lesson on the third and final strip of paper. They may use the displayed prompt to get started: "How is God's command to worship Him a reflection of His love and compassion?"
- a. **Sample student response:** God's command to worship Him is actually a manifestation of His mercy because God is not in need of our worship, yet He places benefit in it for us. He knows us better than we know ourselves and knows what will help us or hurt us in the short-term, long-term, and hereafter, and what is in our best interest both individually and collectively. Moreover, God is aware of our struggles and rewards us not only for fulfilling His commands, but also for the simple act of *trying*, which shows how merciful He is.
3. After students have had a minute to record their response, instruct them to create a paper chain by forming each strip into a ring and then stapling them together.



### Teacher takeaway

After exploring the benefits of worship using 3-4 concrete examples, in the final section, students reconsider the main question of the unit: "Why does God ask us to worship Him?" By exploring God's limitless mercy and appreciativeness, students come to recognize that, although God does not need our worship in any way, He has made worship a means for our own benefit. The consolidation activity for this lesson (paper chain) solidifies students' understanding of all three core concepts of the unit using a visual (chain links that represent the main idea of each lesson plan). These are: (1) the necessity of avoiding anthropomorphic bias; (2) humans' inherent indebtedness to God and the choice to worship out of gratitude; and finally (3) God's mercy in placing benefits in worship. By the end of this section, students will come closer to internalizing the true meaning of worship. They will be encouraged to think of worship, not as a transactional litany of do's and don'ts, but instead as a loving relationship between ourselves and our Creator.

## Stage 3: Assessments

### Formative assessments

- To formatively assess the first objective, you may review the post-it notes and poster boards students created with their groups and shared in the gallery walk (**3.2a-d “Fruits of worship”**). The information recorded on their post-it notes reflects students’ attempts to explain the various benefits of worship an individual may experience in the short-term, long-term, and hereafter, as well as the societal benefits.
- To assess student understanding of the second objective and gauge their level of appreciation upon learning these benefits, see their responses to question two on **3.3 “Benefits reflection.”** You may also use the sample student responses under slide twelve and slide fifteen to formatively assess the second objective.

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Charting benefits**

"Whoever follows the right path follows it **for his own benefit**, and whoever strays does so to his own loss."

فَمَنْ أَخْتَدَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

Act of worship: voluntarily giving in charity (sadaqah)

hereafter (akhira)  
long-term (duriya)  
short-term (duraya)  
individual societal  
31 Charting benefits

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

**“What's in it for me?”**  
charting the benefits of worship

فَمَنْ أَخْتَدَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

"Whoever follows the right path follows it **for his own benefit**, and whoever strays does so to his own loss."

[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

Group A | Act of worship: performing the five daily prayers (salah)

Supplies: Before you begin, make sure you have the following:

- Classmates (3)
- Blank poster board
- Markers (3-5)
- Ruler
- Stack of post-it notes

"**Worship**" acts undertaken with the intent of obeying God's commands (i.e., commands to perform or abstain from an act)

Task Step 1: With your group, you are going to dive deep into the various benefits embedded in God's specific command to worship by performing the five daily prayers (salah). As you browse through the sources below, look for 1-2 benefits for each category:

- Individual benefits in the short-term (duraya)
- Individual benefits in the long-term (duriya)
- Individual benefits in the hereafter (akhira)
- Societal benefits

You may take notes along the margins or on a separate blank sheet of paper.

Step 2: Once you have collected and categorized your information, use your poster and supplies to make a visual with your group (mirroring the graph on 3.1) titled "Charting benefits." Review the rubric at the end of this handout to be clear on the expectations for this activity.

3.2a What's in it for me?

name: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

Share 1-2 benefits from your classmate's poster boards that resonated with you most during the gallery walk.

Post-instruction response:

How do you feel knowing that God has embedded these benefits **for you** in His commands to worship when He didn't have to?

Gallery-walk response:

Share 1-2 benefits from your classmate's poster boards that resonated with you most during the gallery walk.

Post-instruction response:

How do you feel knowing that God has embedded these benefits **for you** in His commands to worship when He didn't have to?

Gallery-walk response:

Share 1-2 benefits from your classmate's poster boards that resonated with you most during the gallery walk.

Post-instruction response:

How do you feel knowing that God has embedded these benefits **for you** in His commands to worship when He didn't have to?

Gallery-walk response:

3.3 Benefits reflection



Additional readings

# References

# References and resources

## Endnotes

### Lesson plan 3

1. Levy, Jessica. "Story from Angel View: The Science behind Why Giving to Charity Feels so Good." *The Desert Sun*, December 7, 2018. <https://www.desertsun.com/story/sponsor-story/angel-view/2018/12/07/science-behind-why-giving-charity-feels-so-good/2232037002/>
2. Surat an-Nur, 24:33.
3. *Mishkat al-Masabih*.
4. *Sunan Ibn Majah* #4210.
5. Surat al-Baqarah, 2:262.
6. *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* #604.
7. *Sahih al-Bukhari* #3666.
8. Surat al-Baqarah, 2:261.
9. Surat al-Hashr, 59:7.

## Qur'anic references

### Lesson plan 1

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I have not created the jinn and humankind except that they should worship Me." [Surat ad-Dhariyat, 51:56]

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْفُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلْمَتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَأْسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ

"...with Him are the keys to the unseen, no one knows them except Him. And He knows what is in the land and sea. Not even a leaf falls without his knowledge..." [Surat al-An'am, 6:59]

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing like God, and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing." [Surat al-Shura, 42:11]

### Lesson plan 1 [optional extension]

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

"There is nothing like God, and He is the all-Seeing, all-Hearing." [Surat al-Shura, 42:11]

## Lesson plan 2

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds.” [Surat al-Fatiha, 1:2]

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“And He is with you wherever you are.” [Surat al-Hadid, 57:4]

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

“We guided him [the human being] to the right path, whether he was grateful or not.” [Surat al-Insan, 76:3]

فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

“And whomsoever is guided, is guided only for the benefit of himself.”  
[Surat Yunus, 10:108]

## Lesson plan 3

فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضْلُلُ عَلَيْهَا

“Whoever follows the right path follows it for his own benefit, and whoever strays does so to his own loss.” [Surat Yunus, 10:108]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ

“You who believe, give charitably from the good things you have acquired and that We have produced for you from the earth.” [Surat al-Baqarah, 2:267]

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الْرَّحْمَةِ إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُذْهِبُكُمْ وَيَسْتَخِفُ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ

“Your Lord is self-sufficient and full of mercy. If He pleased, He could do away with you and replace you with whoever He wills.” [Surat al-An'am, 6:133]

مَا يَفْعُلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَدَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرُتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلَيْمًا

“Why should Allah punish you if you are grateful and faithful? Allah is Ever Appreciative, all-Knowing.” [Surat al-Nisa, 4:147]

**Note:** For verses cited in the activity and handouts, consult worksheets **3.2a-d—“What’s in it for me?: charting the benefits of worship.”**

## **Hadith resources**

### **Lesson plan 2**

The Prophet, peace be upon him, 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 said, “Shall I not be a grateful servant?”  
[*Sahih Bukhari*, 1130; *Sahih Muslim*, 2819]

### **Lesson plan 3**

**Note:** For hadiths cited in the activity and handouts, consult worksheets **3.2a-d—“What’s in it for me?: charting the benefits of worship.”**

## **Multimedia resources**

### **Lesson plan 1**

#### **28 Stunning Close-Up Photos Of Everyday Objects By Self-Taught Photographer:** [https://www.boredpanda.com/close-up-photography-pyanek/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=organic](https://www.boredpanda.com/close-up-photography-pyanek/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic)

**“Cosmic Eye to the Universe: The Ultimate Zoom”:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHRM3Mwd63U&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHRM3Mwd63U&feature=emb_logo)

### **Lesson plan 2**

**“This Will Happen in Your Body in the Next 60 Seconds” | The Infographics Show:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjSTiWcqyFI&t=1s>

### **Lesson plan 3**

#### **Handout 3.2a**

**How mindfulness meditation reshaped her brain:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gNFXuiMrck>

**Does Salah Affect Your Brain?** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg-KzkuOzXg&feature=youtu.be>

**“Becoming Muslim” by Shaykh Nuh Keller | SeekersGuidance**  
<https://seekersguidance.org/articles/general-artices/becoming-muslim-shaykh-nuh-keller/>

**Sujood Releases the Stress in Your Lumbar Spine: Physical Benefits of Salah - Episode 1 | Al-Maghrib Institute:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBCY6PwaX2g>

**3 Reasons Why You Should Know About the Default Mode Network**  
<https://www.resetketamine.com/blog/defaultmodenetwork>

### **Handout 3.2b**

**“The Power of Hello” | Psychology Today:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/science-small-talk/201203/the-power-hello>

**“Smiling and Saying Salam” | Virtual Mosque:** <https://www.virtualmosque.com/ummah/community/smiling-and-saying-salaam/>

**“Silence of the Salams” | Haute Hijab:** <https://blog.hautehijab.com/post/silence-of-the-salaams>

**“Practicing Opposite-to-Emotion Action: A Skill to Help with Intense Emotions | The OCD and Anxiety Center:** <https://theocdandanxietycenter.com/practicing-opposite-to-emotion-action-a-skill-to-help-with-intense-emotions/>

### **Handout 3.2c**

**“Marijuana Is Not a Drug: Road to Return - Episode 29” | Yaqeen Institute:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQjVTJlTWU&t=19s>

**“Living as Muslim in Recovery”: Finding Your Place with Abdirahman Warsame | Confident Muslim, Yaqeen Institute:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eknKKtYrbA>

**“Cannabis (Marijuana) Research Report” | National Institute on Drug Abuse:** <https://nida.nih.gov/download/1380/cannabis-marijuana-research-report.pdf?v=7fc7d24c3dc120a03cf26348876bc1e4>

### **Handout 3.2d**

**“Discovering the Problem with Porn: Gabe Deem’s True Story | Fight the New Drug:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2yhRA9xigI>

**Most Successful Male Porn Star Of All Time Speaks Out On Porn | Fight the New Drug:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hx-p9Wr6xg0>

**The Atheist Who Warned the World About Porn Addiction: Gary Wilson | Your Brain on Porn:** <https://www.deseret.com/2022/8/2/23268655/perspective-the-atheist-who-warned-the-world-about-porn-addiction-gary-wilson-your-brain-on-porn>

**“The Children of Pornhub” | New York Times:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/04/opinion/sunday/pornhub-rape-trafficking.html>

**“How Porn Can Fuel Sex Trafficking” | Fight the New Drug:** <https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-porn-can-fuel-sex-trafficking/>

**“Get the Facts” | Fight the New Drug:** <https://fightthenewdrug.org/getthefacts/>