

## Unveiling the Quranic Foundations of Effective Habits: A Comparative Study with Stephen Covey's Principles

استکشاف الأسس القرآنية للعادات الفعالة: دراسة مقارنة مع مبادئ ستيفن كوفي

### Authors Details

#### 1. Misbah Shahid

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

#### 2. Novairah Maryam (Corresponding Author)

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan. [4980219s@gmail.com](mailto:4980219s@gmail.com)

### Citation

Shahid, Misbah, and Novairah Maryam." Unveiling the Quranic Foundations of Effective Habits: A Comparative Study with Stephen Covey's Principles." *Al-Marjān Research Journal* 3, no. 2 (April–June 2025): 45–61.

### Submission Timeline

**Received:** Mar 04, 2025  
**Revised:** Mar 21, 2025  
**Accepted:** April 05, 2025  
**Published Online:** April 19, 2025

### Publication, Copyright & Licensing

المرجان  
**Al-Marjān**  
Research Journal

Article QR



Al-Marjān Research Center, Lahore, Pakistan.

All Rights Reserved © 2023.

This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



# Unveiling the Quranic Foundations of Effective Habits: A Comparative Study with Stephen Covey's Principles

استكشاف الأسس القرآنية للعادات الفعّالة: دراسة مقارنة مع مبادئ ستيفن كوفي

☆ Misbah Shahid ☆ Novairah Maryam

## Abstract

This analytical study explores the deep connections between the Quranic framework for personal conduct and the principles outlined in Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. By examining key concepts such as proactivity, goal-setting, prioritization, continuous improvement, and interdependence, the research demonstrates that many of Covey's celebrated habits are inherently reflected in Quranic teachings. The study emphasizes how Quranic values—such as accountability, intentional action, time management, mutual respect, and self-renewal—provide a spiritual and ethical foundation for personal and professional growth. Each of Covey's habits is mapped against relevant Quranic verses and themes to highlight the universality and timelessness of these principles. For instance, the concept of "Begin with the End in Mind" is paralleled with the Quranic emphasis on purpose and the afterlife, while "Sharpen the Saw" aligns with the Quranic call for balance between the body, mind, and soul. By integrating Islamic teachings with modern leadership and productivity models, the research offers a holistic framework for self-development that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. This comparative study not only bridges the gap between faith-based and secular approaches to personal growth but also positions the Quran as a valuable source of wisdom in the field of behavioral effectiveness. The findings suggest that combining the moral clarity of the Quran with Covey's practical strategies results in a comprehensive path toward effectiveness, fulfillment, and leadership. The study encourages educators, professionals, and spiritual seekers alike to benefit from this integrated model of growth.

**Keywords:** Quran, Stephen Covey, 7 Habits, personal development, Islamic leadership, effectiveness.

## Introduction

Stephen Covey's seminal work, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" (Covey, 1989<sup>1</sup>), is a cornerstone of personal development literature, offering timeless principles for success in both personal and professional spheres. Covey's insights have resonated with millions

\* M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

\* M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

<sup>1</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 35.

worldwide, shaping the way individuals approach their lives and interactions (Covey, 2004<sup>2</sup>). However, as profound as Covey's teachings are, they are not isolated from broader philosophical and spiritual traditions. In particular, the Islamic tradition, encapsulated in the Quran and the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad), offers a rich tapestry of wisdom and guidance that parallels many of Covey's principles (Khan, 2019<sup>3</sup>; Ramadan, 2009<sup>4</sup>).

This research paper embarks on a comparative study of Covey's "7 Habits" in the light of Quranic perspective and Sunnah, aiming to explore the intersections and divergences between Covey's principles and Islamic teachings on personal development, ethics, and spiritual growth (Ali, 2019<sup>5</sup>; Al-Ghazali, 2016<sup>6</sup>). By juxtaposing Covey's insights with Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions, we seek to unravel the underlying universality of principles that guide human behavior and success across different cultural and religious contexts (Haidt, 2012<sup>7</sup>).

### **Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"**

Stephen Covey (1932-2012) was a renowned American educator, author, and businessman who made significant contributions to the field of personal and organizational effectiveness (Covey, 1989<sup>8</sup>). He is best known for his groundbreaking book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," which has sold over 25 million copies worldwide and remains a cornerstone in the realm of self-help and personal development (Covey, 2004<sup>9</sup>). Covey's teachings emphasize principles-centered living, focusing on character ethics and personal growth as the foundation for success in both personal and professional life (Covey, 1989). His work continues to inspire individuals and organizations to cultivate habits that lead to greater effectiveness, fulfillment, and success (Covey, 2004<sup>10</sup>).

### ***Habit 1: Nurturing a Proactive Mindset***

Comparing the proactive mindset advocated in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" with Quranic teachings and Sunnah reveals striking parallels, highlighting the universal principles of personal development and responsibility (Covey, 1989<sup>11</sup>). In nurturing a proactive mindset, Islam emphasizes individual responsibility and accountability, echoing

---

<sup>2</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 67.

<sup>3</sup> Khān, ‘Abdullāh, *Islamic Ethics and Personal Development* (Leiden: Journal of Islamic Ethics, 2019), 3: 1–18.

<sup>4</sup> Ramadan, Ṭāriq, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 54.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Alī, Muḥammad A., *The Islamic Approach to Personal Development* (Oxford: Journal of Islamic Studies, 2019), 30: 53–70.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field (New York: Library of Arabic Literature, 2016), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Haidt, Jonathan, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 57.

<sup>8</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 89.

<sup>9</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, 123.

<sup>10</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, 145.

<sup>11</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 101.

Habit 1's call to take ownership of one's actions (Covey, 1989<sup>12</sup>). Quranic verses like Surah Al-Anfa'al,

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ<sup>13</sup>

Which translates to "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy."

This verse encourages believers to be prepared, proactive, and self-empowered to face challenges and overcome obstacles. It emphasizes the importance of taking initiative and being responsible for one's actions. Similarly, Covey's Habit 1: Be Proactive, emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for one's own life and choices. It encourages individuals to be self-aware, self-managed, and self-motivated, and to focus on things that are within their control. Surah Al-Baqarah,

لَا يَكْفِيُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا<sup>14</sup>

Which translates to "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear".

Reinforce this notion, affirming that individuals are accountable for their deeds, suggesting a proactive approach to life's challenges. Moreover, Islam encourages continuous personal growth and self-improvement, akin to the Habit 1 principle of empowering personal growth (Covey, 1989<sup>15</sup>). Surah Al-Zilzal (99:7-8),

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ<sup>16</sup> وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ<sup>16</sup>

Which translates to "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it"

Underscores the significance of even the smallest deeds, reflecting the Islamic emphasis on self-betterment through righteous actions and seeking knowledge. Taking initiative in personal development is also emphasized in both contexts. Surah Al-Isra (17:36),

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا<sup>17</sup>

Which translates to "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned".

Advises against blindly following pursuits without knowledge, aligning with the proactive approach of making informed decisions and seeking knowledge advocated in "The 7 Habits. Self-discipline is another shared value. Surah Al-Zumar (39:9),

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَنِتٌ ءَانَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ؕ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ

يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ<sup>18</sup>

Which translates to "Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]?",

<sup>12</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 156.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Anfāl, 8:60.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:286.

<sup>15</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 178.

<sup>16</sup> Az-Zalzala, 99:7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Isrā', 17:36.

<sup>18</sup> Az-Zumar, 39:9.

Praises those who maintain discipline in their worship, mirroring the Habit 1 emphasis on self-discipline and accountability.

Furthermore, Islam underscores the importance of inspiring others through righteous actions, resonating with the idea of inspiring others through example in Habit 1. Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13),

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ<sup>19</sup>

Which translates to "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted".

Emphasizes the nobility of righteousness and serving as a positive influence on others, reinforcing the proactive approach of leading by example. In essence, while "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" provides a secular framework for personal effectiveness, its principles find resonance with Quranic teachings and Sunnah, showcasing the universality of proactive living and personal responsibility across cultures and faiths.

### **Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind - Unlocking the Power of Islamic Goal-Setting**

Comparing the principle of "Begin with the End in Mind" from Stephen Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" with Islamic teachings reveals a profound parallel in the importance of setting clear goals that resonate with one's values and ultimate purpose in life (Covey, 1989<sup>20</sup>). Covey emphasizes the necessity of envisioning desired outcomes before undertaking actions, a sentiment echoed in Islamic teachings which advocate for a similar approach rooted in divine guidance and righteousness. Surah Al-Nisa (4:125)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا<sup>21</sup>  
"And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Ibrahim"

Also in Quran 3:185, it is written:

فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ<sup>22</sup>  
"So, whoever is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [true] success. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion."

This verse reminds us that our ultimate goal is the Hereafter, and we should strive to achieve success in the eternal life, not just focus on temporary worldly gains. Similarly, Covey's Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind, encourages individuals to define their long-term goals and priorities based on their personal values and vision. It emphasizes the importance of having a clear sense of purpose and direction, and aligning our daily actions with our ultimate objectives.

In the Quran, the story of Prophet Nuh serves as a poignant example of having a clear vision and mission (Quran, 11:25-49<sup>23</sup>). Commissioned by Allah to warn his people of impending

<sup>19</sup> Al-Hujurat, 49:13.

<sup>20</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 210.

<sup>21</sup> An-Nisā', 4:125.

<sup>22</sup> Āl 'Imrān, 3:185.

<sup>23</sup> Hūd, 11:25-49.

punishment and to build an ark to save believers, Nuh's ultimate goal was to fulfill his divine mandate despite facing ridicule and rejection from his community. His unwavering commitment to his mission, guided by his faith in Allah's plan, illustrates the power of aligning actions with a predetermined purpose.

Similarly, the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim highlights the necessity of foresight and perseverance in the pursuit of long-term goals (Quran, 37:99-113<sup>24</sup>). When commanded by Allah to sacrifice his son Isma'il, Ibrahim demonstrated unwavering faith and submission to Allah's will, recognizing the ultimate purpose behind the trial. His willingness to sacrifice for the sake of Allah exemplifies the efficacy of beginning with the end in mind, trusting in divine wisdom even when faced with daunting challenges.

Moreover, the life of Prophet Yunus offers insight into the consequences of neglecting one's ultimate purpose (Quran, 21:87-88<sup>25</sup>). Initially reluctant to fulfill his mission of calling his people to repentance, Yunus attempted to flee from his responsibilities but was swallowed by a whale as a consequence. Through this ordeal, Yunus learned the importance of aligning his actions with Allah's commandments, ultimately leading to his repentance and redemption.

By aligning the principles of "Begin with the End in Mind" with Quranic teachings and the Sunnah, individuals can harness the transformative power of goal-setting in their personal and spiritual development (Covey, 1989<sup>26</sup>). Just as ships require a destination to navigate the vast ocean, setting clear goals based on Islamic values provides a guiding light for navigating life's complexities with purpose and conviction (Quran, 2:155<sup>27</sup>). This alignment not only fosters success in this world but also ensures success in the Hereafter, fulfilling the ultimate purpose of human existence.

### ***Mastering Time Management: Understanding Habit 3 - Put First Things First***

Are you weary of being inundated by countless tasks vying for your attention daily? Do you often find yourself grappling with effective prioritization, perpetually ensnared in a cycle of catch-up? Envision a realm where you confidently navigate your to-do list, assuredly focusing on what truly holds paramount importance. This is where the essence of Habit 3 - Put First Things First, comes to fruition, reshaping your approach towards time management and productivity. (Covey, 1989<sup>28</sup>)

### **Understanding the Four Quadrants of Time Management through Quranic Teachings and Sunnah**

To efficaciously manage our time, it is imperative to comprehend the concept of the Four Quadrants, a framework elucidated by Stephen Covey in his seminal work "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" (Covey, 1989<sup>29</sup>). These quadrants categorize tasks and activities based on their urgency and significance, resonating with teachings from the Quran and Sunnah.

<sup>24</sup> Aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37:99–113.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Anbiyā', 21:87–88.

<sup>26</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 234.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:155.

<sup>28</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 256.

<sup>29</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 278.

### Quadrant I: Urgent and Important

Tasks in Quadrant I are characterized by both urgency and importance, necessitating immediate attention. They often stem from unforeseen circumstances or exigencies. Examples include pressing deadlines, crises, and critical issues mandating swift resolution. The Quran underscores the importance of responding promptly to such urgencies:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرْكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ<sup>30</sup>

*“So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.”*

### Quadrant II: Not Urgent but Important

Quadrant II encapsulates tasks that are significant but not necessarily urgent. These activities are frequently relegated to the back burner owing to the absence of immediate deadlines. Yet, investing time in Quadrant II tasks is pivotal for long-term success and personal growth. Quranic teachings echo the significance of such proactive endeavors:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ<sup>31</sup>

*And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good..*

### Quadrant III: Urgent but Not Important

Tasks in Quadrant III are urgent but lack overarching importance. They often encompass distractions, interruptions, and time-consuming activities that diverge from our goals and values. While these tasks may appear urgent, they can be delegated, minimized, or even eliminated. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of managing distractions:

اغْتَبِمُ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ خَمْسٍ، شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ، وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سَقَمِكَ، وَغِنَاكَ قَبْلَ فُقْرِكَ، وَفِرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ شُغْلِكَ، وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ<sup>32</sup>. الراوي: عبدالله بن عباس • ابن حجر العسقلاني، فتح الباري لابن حجر (٢٣٩/١١)

*Take benefit of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you are preoccupied, and your life before your death.*

### Quadrant IV: Not Urgent and Not Important

Quadrant IV encompasses tasks devoid of both urgency and significance. These activities are typically time-wasters and should be minimized. The Quran cautions against indulging in frivolous pursuits:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَقَّعَهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ<sup>33</sup>

*But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.*

<sup>30</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:152.

<sup>31</sup> Al-‘Ankabūt, 29:69.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī, *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, n.d.), 11: 239.

<sup>33</sup> An-Nūr, 24:39.

## Harnessing Quranic Wisdom in Time Management

In the contemporary whirlwind of existence, effective time management poses an escalating challenge. Fortunately, the Quran furnishes invaluable insights and principles that can augment our time management prowess. By aligning our actions with Quranic teachings and Sunnah, we can transcend mere productivity to attain spiritual fulfillment and personal growth.

*The Importance of Seeking Guidance from the Quran:*

1. **Finding Clarity:** The Quran serves as a fount of wisdom, illuminating our path and facilitating informed decision-making. It delineates what truly holds significance in life, enabling us to concentrate on the quintessential facets of our daily responsibilities.

وَلَنَبَلِّغَنَّكُمْ بَشِيرًا مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالتَّمَرَّتِ وَبَشِيرٍ الصَّابِرِينَ<sup>34</sup>

2. **Emphasizing Intention:** Quranic teachings implore us to introspect our intentions, aligning them with our purpose. By commencing each day or task with sincere intentions, we ensure that our actions resonate with genuine devotion and a desire to please Allah.

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ۚ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ<sup>35</sup>

3. **Balancing Priorities:** The Quran accentuates the imperative of equilibrium in every sphere of our lives. It enjoins us to prioritize our obligations to Allah, our families, and our communities. By adhering to this guidance, we can adeptly manage our time and discharge our diverse responsibilities.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ<sup>36</sup>

In essence, Quranic wisdom on time management transcends mere temporal optimization; it entails aligning our actions with our values and striking a harmonious balance conducive to holistic growth and spiritual enrichment. By assimilating these teachings into our lives, we embark on a transformative journey, wherein the profound wisdom of the Quran and Sunnah illuminates our path to enhanced time management practices.

### Embracing Flexibility and Adaptability

In addition to the principles discussed earlier, the Quran also teaches us the importance of flexibility and adaptability in time management. It reminds us that life is full of unexpected twists and turns, and we must learn to adjust our plans and priorities accordingly.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ<sup>37</sup>

By embracing this wisdom, we can develop a more resilient and effective approach to time management, one that balances our goals and values with the uncertainties and challenges of life.<sup>38</sup>

### *Habit 4: Embracing a Win-Win Mindset: Building Positive Relationships in Light of the Quran:*

Have you ever pondered how adopting a win-win mindset could revolutionize your relationships, fostering harmony and mutual prosperity? Picture a world where every

<sup>34</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:155.

<sup>35</sup> As-Saffat, 37:99–113.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Ankabūt, 29:69.

<sup>37</sup> Ar-Ra'd, 13:11.

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous, *5 Simple Techniques for Better Time Management as a Muslim* (n.p.: Islamic Resources, 2024), accessed April 12, 2024, <https://islamicresources.ca/5-simple-techniques-for-better-time-management-as-a-muslim/>, 12.

interaction is characterized by positivity, collaboration, and shared achievement. This is the essence of thinking win-win, a principle deeply embedded in the Quran and exemplified through the Sunnah, transcending mere transactions to nurture profound, meaningful bonds. (Covey 1989<sup>39</sup>)

#### Introduction to Habit 4: Think Win-Win

In the pursuit of wholesome and productive relationships, a principle illuminated by Stephen R. Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" shines brightly: Think Win-Win. Grounded in the teachings of the Quran, this habit underscores the significance of mutual benefit, cooperation, and the cultivation of positive relationships.

قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ<sup>40</sup>

*"Allah will say: 'This is a Day on which the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness.' For them are gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, Allah being pleased with them, and they with Him. That is the great attainment."*

Thinking win-win extends beyond mere compromise; it embodies a paradigm of collaboration centered on long-term prosperity for all involved. This mindset prizes cooperation, fostering a collective intelligence where one individual's success augments the growth and success of others. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَوَادِّهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ، كَمَثَلِ الْجَسَدِ، إِذَا اشْتَكَى عُضْوًا تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ جَسَدِهِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى.<sup>41</sup>

*"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever."* (Sahih al-Bukhari 6011)

By transitioning from a competitive win-lose mentality to one of mutual benefit, we forge robust, meaningful relationships. The Quran teaches us that the success of others is not detrimental to our own but rather enriches it. This mindset prioritizes cooperation over competition, emphasizing the discovery of win-win solutions that advance the interests of all parties.

لَا يَنْهَىكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ<sup>42</sup>

*"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."*

As we delve into the concept of thinking win-win, let's explore its profound implications for nurturing positive relationships and attaining success across various domains. Through practical strategies and insights gleaned from the Quran and Sunnah, we can learn to embrace this mindset, fostering a harmonious, supportive environment for ourselves and those around us.

<sup>39</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 301.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Mā'ida, 5:119.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.), 6: ḥadīth 6011.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Mumtaḥana, 60:8.

### Benefits of Think Win-Win:

A win-win mindset, deeply rooted in Quranic teachings and exemplified through the Sunnah, yields numerous advantages for individuals striving to cultivate positive relationships, both personally and professionally. By embracing this approach, individuals can catalyze collective growth, foster trust, and forge win-win agreements conducive to sustained success and fulfillment.

**1. Collective Growth and Success:** When individuals adopt a win-win mindset, they pivot from pursuing short-term gains to prioritizing mutual benefit and collaboration. This shift cultivates a collective intelligence, where individuals recognize and leverage each other's strengths. By esteeming cooperation over competition, individuals foster an environment conducive to personal and professional development for all.

**2. Trust-Building and Relationship Development:** A cornerstone benefit of thinking win-win is the establishment of trust within relationships. When individuals approach interactions with the aim of seeking mutually beneficial outcomes, they foster trust grounded in transparency, honesty, and empathy. This trust fortifies interpersonal bonds, facilitating open and effective communication and nurturing healthier, more gratifying relationships founded on mutual respect.

**3. Development of Win-Win Agreements:** A win-win mindset facilitates the formulation of agreements where all parties stand to gain. Through adept negotiation and collaboration, individuals can devise innovative solutions that address everyone's needs and interests. This process engenders a sense of ownership and commitment, as all stakeholders have a vested interest in the agreement's success. By prioritizing mutual benefit and considering others' perspectives and objectives, win-win agreements engender sustainable success. This approach not only resolves conflicts but also fosters fruitful collaborations and partnerships.

In conclusion, embracing a win-win mindset in personal and professional relationships confers a myriad of benefits. By championing collective growth, nurturing trust, and forging win-win agreements, individuals empower themselves to cultivate robust, meaningful connections. The teachings of the Quran and Sunnah remind us that by valuing cooperation over competition, we can foster an environment conducive to harmony and mutual prosperity. Through the practice of thinking win-win, individuals unlock their full potential, contributing to a more flourishing and gratifying society.

### **Habit 5: Empathic Listening and Effective Communication: Insights from Quranic Teachings:**

Imagine a conversation where every word spoken is met with genuine understanding and empathy, transcending mere dialogue. In a world filled with noise and distractions, effective communication is not just about being heard but also about understanding others. The Quran, the holy book of Islam, provides valuable insights into communication strategies, echoing the principles of Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood, as espoused by Stephen Covey in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." (Covey, 1989<sup>43</sup>)

In Habit 5, individuals are encouraged to approach communication by empathetically listening and understanding others' perspectives, aiming to create meaningful connections and foster empathy. This aligns with Quranic teachings, which emphasize being considerate, compassionate, and patient towards one another.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 323.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Hujurat, 49:13.

### **The Principle of Seeking Understanding:**

Prioritizing understanding over being understood is crucial in effective communication. This shift in focus emphasizes active listening and empathy, fostering stronger relationships and communication skills. Quranic teachings highlight empathy and open-mindedness, promoting genuine understanding in interactions. Active listening, suspending judgment, and humility are keys to seeking understanding. By embracing this principle, we nurture authentic connections and contribute to a compassionate society, reflecting Quranic wisdom and enhancing human connection.

### **Empathic Listening in the Quran:**

The Quran offers profound wisdom on empathic listening as a transformative tool in effective communication. Empathic listening, the act of truly understanding and connecting with others, plays a pivotal role in fostering empathy and establishing meaningful relationships.

### **Fostering Connection through Understanding:**

Believers are encouraged to approach conversations with a genuine desire to understand others, fostering empathy and compassion. By engaging with another person's thoughts, emotions, and experiences, an atmosphere of trust and openness is created. **Nurturing**

### **Empathy and Compassion:**

The Quran promotes the cultivation of empathy and compassion, reminding us of the value of respecting diverse perspectives. Through empathic listening, we acknowledge others' struggles, joys, and vulnerabilities, fostering a deeper appreciation for human experiences.

### **Incorporating Quranic Teachings in Daily Life:**

Integrating Quranic principles of effective communication into daily life enhances understanding, empathy, and collaboration.

#### *1. Active Listening: A Key Element:*

The Quran emphasizes active listening, giving full attention to the speaker with an open mind. As Allah says,

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ<sup>45</sup>

*"And when the Quran is recited, then listen to it and pay attention."*

#### *2. Respectful Dialogue:*

Engaging in respectful dialogue is stressed in the Quran, urging believers to speak in a good manner. Allah says,

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا<sup>46</sup>

*"Speak to people in a good manner."*

#### *3. Practicing Patience:*

Patience is highlighted as crucial in dealing with conflicts or misunderstandings. Allah says,

وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ<sup>47</sup>

*"And be patient over what befalls you."*

By integrating Quranic teachings into daily interactions, one can cultivate a communication style guided by empathy, respect, and patience, echoing the principles of effective communication outlined in Habit 5.

### **The Power of Synergy: Exploring Habit 6 in the Quran**

The magic of collaboration becomes apparent when individuals unite with a shared purpose, each contributing their unique strengths. Picture the synergy that blossoms when diverse

<sup>45</sup> Al-A'raf, 7:204.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:83.

<sup>47</sup> Luqman, 31:17.

minds merge towards a common goal. This essence of collective brilliance is vividly depicted in Habit 6 of the Quran - Synergize. In a world where individual triumph often takes precedence, unlocking the power of collaboration can lead to extraordinary results surpassing solitary endeavors. The crux of synergy lies in embracing varied perspectives, backgrounds, and skills to craft a harmonious fusion that propels all towards shared objectives. Habit 6, Synergize, as articulated by Stephen R. Covey in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," holds immense potential for personal and professional metamorphosis. (Covey, 1989<sup>48</sup>)

This habit extols the virtue of collaboration, diversity, and collective intellect in achieving remarkable outcomes. Synergy, the fruit of genuine collaboration, embodies the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By embracing diverse perspectives and skill sets, teams tap into untapped potential, fostering trust, inclusion, and creativity. Both in personal and professional realms, synergy becomes the linchpin of success, enabling individuals and teams to transcend conventional thinking and uncover innovative solutions collectively. By actively listening to diverse viewpoints, the synergy equation springs to life. As Covey eloquently puts it, "Synergy is not just a buzzword, but a way of life." (Covey, 1989<sup>49</sup>). By fostering intentional collaboration and a culture of inclusivity, we unlock the power of synergy to achieve superior outcomes.

In overcoming challenges to achieve synergy, Quranic teachings and the Sunnah provide guidance on addressing common obstacles in collaboration:

**1. Communication Barriers:** Allah says that: *"And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], 'Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people kindly and establish prayer and give zakah.' Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing."*<sup>50</sup>

This verse underscores the importance of speaking with kindness and clarity to overcome communication barriers. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also stressed the significance of clear communication, instructing believers to speak truthfully and courteously.

**2. Resistance to Change:** Allah says that: *"Allah is the one who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and white hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Competent."*<sup>51</sup>

This verse reminds believers of the natural cycle of change and growth. Embracing new ideas and approaches, as required in synergy, is part of this cycle. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) led by example, initiating various reforms and changes in society despite facing resistance.

**3. Ego and Personal Agendas:** Allah says that: *"O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames."*<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 345.

<sup>49</sup> Covey, Stephen R., *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, 367.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:83.

<sup>51</sup> Ar-Rūm, 30:54.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Hujurat, 49:11.

This verse underscores the importance of humility and mutual respect. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stressed the value of humility and cautioned against arrogance, emphasizing collaboration and cooperation over personal agendas.

**4. Lack Of Trust:** Allah says that: *"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do."*<sup>53</sup>

This verse emphasizes the importance of justice and fairness in relationships. Trust is built on integrity and fairness, as demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his dealings with others. His honesty and trustworthiness earned him the title of Al-Amin (The Trustworthy).

**Habit 7: Transform Your Life with the Notion of Sharpening the Saw in the Quran:**

Transforming your life through the notion of sharpening the saw is akin to nurturing a flame within yourself, ensuring it burns brightly and steadfastly despite life's gusts and gustoes. Delving into the Quranic teachings and the Sunnah unveils a treasure trove of wisdom that illuminates this path of personal growth and renewal.

The Quran, in its essence, serves as a divine manual for human existence, offering guidance not only for spiritual elevation but also for the refinement of one's character and the pursuit of excellence in all facets of life. Just as a skilled artisan hones their tools to perfection before crafting a masterpiece, so too must individuals sharpen their faculties to navigate the complexities of existence effectively.

In Surah Al-Mu'minun, Allah reminds believers of the imperative to continuously improve themselves, stating,

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ<sup>54</sup>

*"Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?"*

This verse underscores the notion that human life is imbued with purpose and potential, urging individuals to strive for self-improvement and spiritual growth.

Moreover, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) serve as a beacon of guidance in this pursuit of excellence. His emphasis on seeking knowledge, maintaining good character, dedicating oneself to worship, practicing self-reflection, and embracing continuous learning provides a comprehensive framework for personal development. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) Hadith,

طلبُ العلمِ فريضةٌ على كلِّ مسلمٍ.<sup>55</sup>

*"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim,"*

Encapsulates the importance of intellectual growth and lifelong learning in Islam. This pursuit of knowledge encompasses not only religious scholarship but also secular education and practical skills that contribute to individual and societal advancement.

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) exemplified the virtues of self-reflection and introspection, as highlighted in his Hadith,

المؤمنُ مرآةُ المؤمنِ، والمؤمنُ أخو المؤمنِ، يكفُّ عليه ضيَعتهُ ويحوطُهُ من ورائِهِ.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Al-Mā'ida, 5:8.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Mu'minūn, 23:115.

<sup>55</sup> Ibn Māja, Muḥammad ibn Yazīd, *Sunan Ibn Māja* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1422 AH), ḥadīth 224; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad, *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1415 AH), 9.

*"The believer is a mirror to his brother."*

This metaphor underscores the importance of introspection in recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses, facilitating personal growth and interpersonal harmony. In the practice of Salah, Muslims find a powerful tool for self-renewal and spiritual elevation. As Allah states in Surah Al-Baqarah,

وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ<sup>57</sup>

*"And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]."*

Salah serves as a means of physical and spiritual purification, fostering mindfulness, discipline, and gratitude.

The preservation of the Quran during the Prophet's (peace be upon him) time underscores the meticulous care and attention given to safeguarding the divine message. Through oral transmission and written compilation, the Quran was preserved in its pristine form, ensuring its accessibility and authenticity for generations to come.

In conclusion, the exploration of the 7 habits of highly effective people through the lens of Quranic teachings and Sunnah reveals a roadmap for personal growth and spiritual development. By aligning one's actions with the divine guidance found in the Quran and emulating the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), individuals can sharpen their saws and embark on a journey of excellence and fulfillment in this life and the Hereafter.

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Stephen Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" offers a comprehensive framework for personal and professional development. Through these habits, Covey emphasizes the importance of taking proactive control of one's life, setting clear goals, managing time effectively, fostering win-win relationships, empathetic communication, collaborative synergy, and continuous self-renewal. The habits encourage individuals to cultivate a mindset focused on principles-centered living, where values and character ethics guide decision-making and behavior. By internalizing these habits, individuals can enhance their effectiveness, productivity, and overall well-being. Furthermore, Covey's approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of personal and professional aspects of life, highlighting the importance of holistic growth. Ultimately, the "7 Habits" serve as a timeless guide for navigating life's challenges, fostering positive relationships, and achieving lasting success. They inspire individuals to become proactive agents of change in their lives, empowering them to align their actions with their values and goals. As a result, embracing these habits can lead to greater fulfillment, effectiveness, and ultimately, a more meaningful and purpose-driven existence.

#### ***Spiritual Guidance from the Quran:***

Spiritual guidance is a beacon illuminating the path of accountability, a cornerstone in shaping our lives and society. Rooted in deep wisdom, this guidance transcends moral duty, offering transformative insights drawn from the profound teachings of the Quran. Within its verses lies the essence of individual responsibility, guiding us towards lives filled with purpose, growth, and fulfillment. As we embark on this enlightening journey, we uncover treasures of self-accountability, unlocking the secrets to a more conscious and impactful

<sup>56</sup> Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1420 AH), ḥadīth 4918; Al-Albānī, Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1422 AH), ḥadīth 6656.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Baqara, 2:45.

existence. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:286) reminds us that Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity, reinforcing the notion of individual accountability and proactive engagement with life's challenges. Similarly, Surah Al-Zilzal (99:7-8) underscores the significance of even the smallest deeds, emphasizing self-betterment through righteous actions and seeking knowledge. Through aligning ourselves with Quranic teachings, we nurture a proactive mindset akin to Stephen Covey's Habit 1, fostering personal growth, self-discipline, and the noble endeavor of inspiring others through righteous example (Surah Al-Hujurat, 49:13). In essence, the Quran serves as a profound source of wisdom, guiding us towards a life of accountability, purpose, and spiritual fulfillment.

### Suggestions:

- \* Conduct a comparative analysis of specific Quranic verses and the corresponding habits outlined by Covey, highlighting similarities and differences in their teachings and approaches to personal development, to gain a deeper understanding of the convergence of Islamic principles and Covey's habits.
- \* Explore case studies or examples from Islamic history or contemporary Muslim figures who exemplify the principles discussed in both the Quran and Covey's book, illustrating practical applications of these teachings in real-life scenarios, and demonstrating how these principles can be effectively integrated into daily life.
- \* Investigate the potential challenges or obstacles individuals may face in integrating Quranic teachings and Covey's habits into their daily lives, and propose strategies for overcoming these challenges based on Islamic principles, to facilitate a smoother and more effective adoption of these principles.
- \* Consider the role of spirituality and mindfulness in both the Quranic framework and Covey's approach to effectiveness, examining how incorporating spiritual practices can enhance personal growth and well-being, and highlighting the importance of spiritual development in achieving effectiveness.
- \* Discuss the implications of this integration of perspectives for leadership development in various contexts, such as business, education, and community engagement, emphasizing the importance of ethical leadership rooted in moral principles, and exploring how these principles can be applied in different leadership settings.
- \* Examine feedback or critiques from scholars or practitioners within Islamic studies or leadership development fields regarding the alignment of Quranic teachings with Covey's habits, addressing any potential points of contention or areas for further refinement in the analysis, and strengthening the argument through engagement with diverse perspectives.

These suggestions provide a solid foundation for further research and exploration, and can help deepen our understanding of the intersection of Islamic principles and Covey's habits, as well as their practical applications in various contexts.



### Bibliography / کتابیات

- \* Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath. *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1420 AH.
- \* Al-Albānī, Muḥammad Naṣir al-Dīn. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*. Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 1422 AH.
- \* Al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000 CE.
- \* Al-Ghazālī, Muḥammad. *The Alchemy of Happiness*. Translated by Claud Field. New York: Library of Arabic Literature, 2016.
- \* 'Alī, Muḥammad A. "The Islamic Approach to Personal Development." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 30 (2019): 53–70.

- \* Anonymous. "5 Simple Techniques for Better Time Management as a Muslim." *Islamic Resources*. Accessed April 12, 2024. <https://islamicresources.ca/5-simple-techniques-for-better-time-management-as-a-muslim/>.
- \* Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.
- \* Covey, Stephen R. *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- \* Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012.
- \* Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī. *Fath al-Bārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 2000 CE.
- \* Ibn Māja, Muḥammad ibn Yazīd. *Sunan Ibn Māja*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1422 AH.
- \* Khān, ‘Abdullāh. "Islamic Ethics and Personal Development." *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 3 (2019): 1–18.
- \* Ramadan, Tāriq. *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- \* Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad. *Al-Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1415 AH.