

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

All praises and thanks be to Allah, The Almighty, The Giver of Bountiful Blessings and Gifts. Prayers and peace of Allah be upon the noble Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and upon his family and companions, the honorable followers.

Driven by purpose and passion has led me to the birth of “Straight from the Heart: Life Notes of a Reflecting Mind”.

With the humble intention of being the best one can be and hopefully, *insha Allah*, bringing out the best of others along the way, the single purpose of this compilation boiled down to this: to share. Reflecting on the words of Prophet Shuaib as mentioned in the holy Quran:

I only intend reform as much as I am able. And my success is not but through Allah. Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return.

Hud 11: 88

This is, therefore, a sharing of knowledge that I have gained through my own personal experiences, observations and readings as well as those gained from various teachers along my life journey. It is my humble attempt to reflect

on the various learning and guidance provided to us by the Almighty, revealed to the greatest teacher and role model – our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

I would also like to reflect on the beautiful creations that Allah has created around us. However, more importantly, I would like to invite readers to reflect and ponder with me on the fundamental similarity that each one of us gets to experience.

Life.

It has sure taught us a lot, hasn't it?

I would like to think that this compilation gives readers simple and easy-to-understand analogies and experiences (*insha Allah*) and I hope that these sharings can bring value to the lives of readers by opening up their perspective on life. That it will lead them into living better and more meaningful lives, becoming better and more successful people, be it in their career or personal lives. It is important to note that I intend for this compilation to be for all walks of life, be it Muslims or Non-Muslims, regardless of race, age or gender.

Just one condition before you read any further: it is my fervent *Du'a* that you read it with an open mind, heart and soul. The best of the content can therefore be decided solely by you, my respected reader.

This compilation is never meant to tell you what to do but it is more to facilitate your thinking process: to look at things in a different way and bring the best out of it.

Let us use the usage of a sponge as an analogy. First, we absorb all the water that runs through it and then drain out the unneeded waste later. This translates to: keep and practice what you think is relevant to you and discard what you think is irrelevant to you. It is all up to you, my dear readers.

It is never my intention to change a person; it is not even really the ultimate choice of a person to change. It is only with the blessings of the Almighty that a person can see the light.

Say: Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our Lord and in Allah let the believers put their trust.

At-Taubah 9: 51

On the same note, we can only receive such blessings to change if we start doing something about it. Greatness comes to those who seek. It simply does not make sense for a person to change without putting any effort. In order to achieve anything in life, there is only one way to it: hard work – no shortcuts!

Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice.

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company

It is all about striving in giving and being the best that we can be. *Insha Allah*, the best will be returned manifold to us. As the saying goes, in order to receive, you must first give.

The upper [giving] hand is better than the lower [taking] hand.

Bukhari and Muslim

Change therefore starts with us. The act of putting our own efforts first is described and reminded by Allah clearly in the Quran.

This is because Allah never change a favor which He has conferred upon a people until they change their own condition; and because Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Al-Anfal 8: 53

You may find that most of the contents of this compilation are nothing new. None of the contents, I believe, are rocket science. You might therefore be surprised that most of it are things that you have known all your life, things that were instilled by your parents or teachers since young or things that were taught and continuously emphasised by your religion.

It actually just boils down to pure **common sense!**

Yes, you read right. It is basic common sense. And that is precisely what I hope to do, that is, to appeal to your common sense.

Common sense is crucial.

This is something that my mentor and brother once taught me. What is more important is to consciously remember that common sense is crucial, as most of the things we want in life do not need a crack in the head to achieve. Most of the time, it only takes **common sense!**

Simply said, but not simply practiced?

I admit this and I realise that as humans, we are beings who are forgetful and tend to take things for granted. Appreciating this important fact, I have discovered that the secret to making the compilation more effective to practice in real life is to remind and share it with one another. This concept of reminding one another was made clear and taught by our Creator in His Book.

Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.

Al-Asr 103: 3

It is important to note and impress on a disclaimer that this compilation is not an attempt to write an Islamic text or reference. Nevertheless, there would be some references made to the teachings, literature, verses of the Quran as well as hadiths from the beautiful religion of Islam.

As I am not officially trained and educated in the field of Islamic studies, all references and concepts mentioned are reviewed by appropriate individuals who have relevant knowledge credentials. This is to ensure that all the writings, which can be perceived to be Islamic in nature due to the author's belief and love for Islam, do not contradict with the true nature of Islam or be misleading in any way.

Despite the disclaimer that this is not an attempt to write an Islamic text or reference, this is however a humble attempt by myself (and my friends) to create awareness on *shariah* and clear any misconceptions or misperceptions about it – be it on the word, the meaning and what it really represents, literally, conceptually and technically. There are too many injustice remarks and perceptions being thrown towards *shariah* and it has even become a taboo subject for a lot of people, especially in the west. The saddest thing about it is that sometimes, this wrong perception is even formed by fellow Muslims.

Islam is a beautiful religion and it is with strong faith that it is revealed in a perfect form, completed through revelation to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). However, misperceptions on this beautiful religion have been created across the globe due to the actions of certain group of Muslims, purportedly acting in the name of Islam; be it the extreme of terrorism and to the more frequent or apparent low morale values displayed by a lot of Muslims in everyday life.

In realising the injustice that is being formed on the beautiful religion due to the generalisation of people on the act of a few distinct groups and also the inability of majority of Muslims to explore and live Islam in its true form, this compilation also attempts, in selected topics and where possible, to give a clearer understanding on the beauty of Islam through the sharing and examples cited.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy the sharings I have compiled. Most of it are captured from life sharing sessions of my own personal experiences, the teachings by mentors and teachers as well as the sharing by numerous brothers and sisters I have met along my journey, both in formal and informal settings. I have tried my best to keep the contents as simple and light, trying to make it easy to understand and practised.

The journey has only begun and is far from the end. There is still so much for each of us to learn and share, from and with one another – straight from the heart!

Learn, unlearn and relearn and along the way, don't forget to have fun!