

## The Meaning of Prayer in the Qur'an as a Response to Contemporary Moral and Spiritual Crises

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### ABSTRACT

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The moral and spiritual crisis has become an increasingly prominent phenomenon in contemporary society, marked by a weakening orientation towards divine values, rising materialism, and the degradation of individual and social ethics. This study aims to thematically analyze verses from the Qur'an about prayer and relate them to the reality of the contemporary moral and spiritual crisis in order to demonstrate their theoretical and practical relevance. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach through a literature review with primary data in the form of Qur'anic verses related to prayer, specifically QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 43, QS. Thaha [20]: 14, and QS. Al-Ankabut [29]: 45, as well as secondary data from tafsir literature and scientific articles. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic (maudhu'i) tafsir approach. The results of the study show that prayer in the perspective of the Qur'an has integrated theological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions and functions as a means of forming divine consciousness and human ethics. This study concludes that prayer is a relevant Qur'anic response to the moral and spiritual crisis in the modern era.

**Keywords:** *moral crisis, prayer, spiritual crisis, the Qur'an, thematic interpretation*

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the modern era, marked by technological advances, globalization of information, and changes in social patterns, has had a significant impact on human moral and spiritual order (Uzma & Masyithoh, 2024). On the one hand, this progress has made various aspects of life easier, but on the other hand, it has given rise to an increasingly worrying moral and spiritual crisis. Phenomena such as ethical degradation, rising individualism, existential anxiety, and humanity's distancing from divine values have become realities that cannot be ignored. Various contemporary studies show that this crisis is not only individual in nature, but also reflects structural problems in modern social life that are increasingly detached from transcendental values. This condition confirms that modern moral and spiritual problems cannot be solved solely through technocratic or materialistic approaches, but require a normative and transcendent value foundation. In this context, Islamic teachings offer prayer as a fundamental spiritual instrument for rebuilding human moral and spiritual balance. The Qur'an positions prayer not merely as a ritual of worship, but as a means of character building and self-control in facing the challenges of contemporary life (Kirana & Sulidar, 2024). The interpretation of prayer as a transformative practice shows that ritual worship in Islam has direct relevance to the ethical and spiritual issues of modern humans (Syafruddin, 2025). Thus, prayer can be understood as a medium for shaping self-awareness oriented towards values, moral responsibility, and connection with God.

A number of studies have examined various dimensions of prayer from religious, psychological, and educational perspectives, but their focus remains partial and has not yet directly linked the meaning of prayer in the Qur'an with contemporary moral and spiritual crises in a holistic manner (Fitri et al., 2025). These studies generally place prayer as a supporting variable in character building or psychological well-being, rather than as the main normative framework in responding to the moral crisis of modern society. This approach implies an understanding of prayer that tends to be instrumental and does not touch on its conceptual-ethical dimensions in depth. For example, research by Pertiwi dan Ali (2025) shows that prayer plays an important role in shaping the moral character of Muslim youth, with reference to the interpretation of Surah Al-'Ankabut [29]:45, which emphasizes the function of prayer in preventing immoral and wicked deeds among youth, even though its practice has not been fully able to overcome moral challenges among them.

Furthermore, a study by Burniat dan Sassi (2025) highlights the spiritual and social dimensions of prayer through a thematic analysis of verses on prayer in the Qur'an using a psychological approach, emphasizing that the ritual of prayer can shape spiritual piety as well as social commitment, but the study is still limited to an explanation of values without linking them to the phenomenon of contemporary moral crisis. Several other studies enrich our understanding of the psychological aspects and inner experiences of prayer. For example, Sulthon dan Yazid (2025) found that the practice of prayer can strengthen the soul, provide a peaceful experience, interpersonal sensitivity, and solutions to life's pressures, indicating the positive psychological impact of prayer. However, these findings do not explicitly position prayer as a comprehensive ethical and spiritual response to the moral problems of modern society. Therefore, the contributions of previous research are still fragmentary and have not yet established an integrative conceptual framework.

However, scientific studies that systematically place the meaning of prayer in the Qur'an

as a normative response to contemporary moral and spiritual crises are still relatively limited. Previous literature has mostly discussed prayer from the aspects of fiqh, procedures, the virtues of worship, or its influence on psychological well-being in general. Some studies emphasize the educational value of prayer in shaping good character, especially in the context of Islamic educational institutions, but few integrate a thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses on prayer with the contextual realities of the moral and spiritual challenges of modern society (Ismail, 2018). This condition shows a gap between normative-theological studies and contextual analyses that address contemporary humanitarian issues. This gap opens up space for research that connects the text of the Qur'an with social reality in a dialogical and reflective manner.

Theoretically, this study is based on the paradigm of religious value internalization and religious moral formation, which asserts that religious rituals accompanied by a deep understanding of their meaning can shape an individual's moral disposition and spiritual orientation (Glock & Stark, 1965). In classical Islamic thought, Al-Ghazali asserts that prayer performed without presence of heart will only result in physical movements without significant moral influence (Al-Ghazali, 2005). In line with this, Quraish Shihab (2002) interprets that the main function of prayer in the Qur'an is to build ethical and spiritual awareness that is reflected in social behavior, so that prayer cannot be separated from the formation of human character and moral integrity. This theoretical framework emphasizes that prayer functions as a mechanism for internalizing values that bridges the ritual, moral, and social dimensions (Falah et al., 2024). With this framework, prayer is understood as a process of continuous personality formation, not merely a formal symbolic activity.

However, there is a significant research gap regarding the direct relationship between verses in the Qur'an that discuss prayer and the phenomenon of moral and spiritual crisis in modern society. The lack of studies that interpret prayer as a conceptual, ethical, and spiritual response to contemporary problems indicates the need for more comprehensive and contextual research. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to place the meaning of prayer in the Qur'an not merely as a ritual obligation or individual psychological therapy, but as an instrument of moral and spiritual transformation relevant to the challenges of modern life. With this approach, the research is expected to broaden the horizon of prayer studies from the ritual dimension to the dimension of social and humanitarian transformation. This approach is also expected to contribute theoretically to the development of thematic Qur'anic studies that are responsive to contemporary social problems.

Thus, this study aims to present a thematic analysis of the verses of the Qur'an about prayer, relating them to the reality of contemporary moral and spiritual crises, and demonstrating the theoretical and practical relevance of prayer as a value-based response to humanitarian problems in the modern era. More specifically, this study seeks to answer how the concept of prayer in the Qur'an can be understood as a normative framework for rebuilding the moral and spiritual consciousness of modern humans. Through this objective, this study also seeks to affirm the position of prayer as the center of ethical and spiritual development in Muslim life amid the complexities of modernity.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design, because the main objects of study are religious texts and scientific literature relevant to the themes of prayer,

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morality, and spirituality. A library research design is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the ideas, concepts, and normative values contained in religious text sources (Akbar, 2024). The qualitative approach was chosen to enable a deep understanding of the meaning of prayer as represented in the Qur'an and its relevance as a normative response to contemporary moral and spiritual crises.

Methodologically, this study applies a thematic interpretation approach (*tafsir maudhu'i*) to verses of the Qur'an related to prayer. The thematic interpretation approach was chosen because it is able to present a systematic and comprehensive understanding of a Qur'anic theme by compiling verses scattered throughout various surahs. This approach is carried out by identifying, cataloging, and grouping verses of the Qur'an that discuss prayer, both in terms of commands, purposes, functions, and moral and social implications. These verses are then analyzed thematically to find a complete and comprehensive pattern of meaning related to the role of prayer in human moral and spiritual development. Through this step, the analysis is directed at building a coherent conceptual framework of prayer that is relevant to the context of modern life.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of verses from the Qur'an that are relevant to the theme of prayer, such as QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 43, QS. Thaha [20]: 14, and QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]: 45. These verses were selected based on their content, which explicitly emphasizes the normative, spiritual, and moral dimensions of prayer. Secondary data includes classical and contemporary *tafsir* books, such as *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* by Al-Ghazali and *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* by M. Quraish Shihab, as well as national and international journal articles discussing prayer, morality, spirituality, and the crisis of values in modern society. The secondary literature also includes studies of religious psychology and theories of religious value internalization to enrich the conceptual analysis. The use of classical and contemporary sources is intended to present a dialogue between Islamic thought traditions and modern academic discourse.

The scope of this research is limited to conceptual and normative analysis, thus excluding field research or empirical measurement of religious behavior in society. This limitation is imposed so that the focus of the research remains on exploring the textual and contextual meanings of prayer from the perspective of the Qur'an. Thus, the research results are expected to be conceptual formulations that can be used as theoretical references for further empirical studies.

Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation studies, namely by tracing, reading, and critically reviewing relevant written sources. This process was carried out systematically to ensure the validity and reliability of the data used. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using content analysis and descriptive-interpretive analysis. Content analysis was used to identify the main themes related to prayer in the Qur'an, while descriptive-interpretive analysis was used to interpret the meaning of these verses by relating them to the context of contemporary moral and spiritual crises. This analytical approach allows researchers to connect the normative messages of the Qur'an with social reality in a reflective and critical manner. The analysis process is carried out in stages, starting from data reduction, theme categorization, to drawing conceptual conclusions in line with the research objectives. These stages are designed to maintain consistency between the research objectives, theoretical framework, and analysis results.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a thematic analysis of Qur'anic verses related to prayer, this study finds that prayer is a Qur'anic concept with a broad and multidimensional meaning. The Qur'an does not position prayer solely as an individual ritual obligation, but rather as a value system that encompasses theological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions in an integrated manner. The integration of these dimensions shows that prayer has a strategic role in the formation of a complete human being (insān kāmil), both in terms of one's relationship with Allah and in terms of social relations with other human beings. This finding confirms that prayer, from the perspective of the Qur'an, must be understood as a normative practice that has transformative power, not merely a symbolic activity that is separate from the realities of life.

The thematic approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the meaning of prayer by linking various verses scattered throughout the Qur'an. The results of the analysis show that the command to pray is always associated with the formation of religious awareness, moral control, and social responsibility. Thus, prayer in the perspective of the Qur'an cannot be understood partially or formalistically. Such an interpretation has the potential to reduce the transformative function of prayer and turn it into a mere routine of worship that loses its ethical and social power. These results are in line with the methodological framework of the study, which places thematic interpretation as an approach to reading the connection between the meaning of verses and contemporary human problems.

In the context of the contemporary moral and spiritual crisis characterized by a weakening of religious awareness, rising individualism, value relativism, and a void in the meaning of life, prayer has very significant relevance. The Qur'an offers prayer as a normative and practical mechanism for reorienting human life in harmony with divine and human values. Therefore, the discussion of the results of this study is directed at showing how prayer, if understood and lived correctly, can function as a value-based response to humanitarian problems in the modern era. In other words, prayer acts as a bridge between the text of revelation and social reality, enabling Qur'anic values to remain alive and operational in the context of modernity.

### The Thematic Meaning of Prayer in the Qur'an: Theological and Spiritual Dimensions

The results of the analysis show that the theological dimension is the main foundation in the interpretation of prayer according to the Qur'an. QS. Thaha [20]: 14 emphasizes that the main purpose of prayer is to remember Allah (*dzikrullah*), which is the core of a Muslim's religious consciousness. In other words, prayer acts as a bridge between the text of revelation and social reality, enabling Qur'anic values to remain alive and operational in the context of modernity. This affirmation shows that prayer not only functions as a normative obligation, but also as a medium for the actualization of tawhid in daily life.

إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدِنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

*"Verily, I am Allah, there is no god but Me; so worship Me and establish prayer to remember Me." (QS. Thaha [20]: 14)*

This verse shows that prayer serves as a means of direct communication between humans and Allah. According to al-Tabari, the phrase *li dzikrī* means that prayer must be performed with full awareness of Allah's presence, so that worship becomes a medium for strengthening faith and monotheism (Al-Tabari, 2001). Ibn Kathir emphasizes that prayer is the most effective act of worship in maintaining the continuity of faith because it is performed regularly

and in a structured manner (Ibn Kathir, 2004). Thus, the continuity of prayer has direct implications for the stability of faith and spiritual consistency of a Muslim.

In Islamic philosophy, prayer is described as a spiritual journey to “detach oneself from worldly affairs” and surrender oneself completely to Allah, seeking His guidance and help. Prayer serves as a purifier of the soul (tazkiyah al-nafs), which trains humility, subdues the ego, and fosters awareness that humans are weak creatures who depend on God. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the value of prayer lies in “the presence of the heart”; living prayer strengthens the heart and calms the soul in the midst of existential difficulties (Armanda et al., 2025; Huda, 2022). The concept of tazkiyah al-nafs places prayer as a means of spiritual education that is internal and continuous, not just a formal ritual.

In the context of modern life, spiritual crises often arise as a result of the severing of human relations with God. A life dominated by materialistic and pragmatic logic causes humans to lose the transcendent meaning of life. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1997) states that the modern crisis is essentially a spiritual crisis, namely the loss of human awareness of the divine dimension in life. In this framework, prayer functions as a mechanism for spiritual restoration that returns humans to an awareness of faith and existential dependence on Allah. The results of this analysis show that prayer has a corrective function on the orientation of modern human life, which tends to be trapped in materialism and secularization of values.

In addition, the spiritual dimension of prayer is also closely related to the concept of *khusyu'*. The Qur'an emphasizes that the spiritual success of a believer depends on the quality of *khusyu'* in prayer (QS. Al-Mu'minun [23]: 1–2). *Khusyu'* is not only an inner attitude during prayer, but also a state of consciousness that affects one's entire behavior in life. Prayer performed with *khusyu'* will bring inner peace, clarity of thought, and emotional stability, which are very much needed in modern life full of pressure. Thus, *khusyu'* can be understood as an indicator of the success of prayer in shaping an individual's spiritual integrity and psychological resilience.

Thus, theologically and spiritually, prayer serves as a means of forming a deep and continuous awareness of faith. This function makes prayer relevant as a response to the contemporary spiritual crisis rooted in the loss of the divine dimension in human life. This finding confirms that revitalizing the meaning of prayer is an urgent need in efforts to rebuild the spirituality of modern humans oriented towards transcendental values.

### **Prayer as an Instrument for Individual Moral and Ethical Development**

In addition to its theological and spiritual dimensions, the results of this study show that the Qur'an explicitly links prayer with moral development and individual behavioral control. QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]: 45 is a key verse in understanding the ethical function of prayer:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

“Indeed, prayer prevents immorality and wrongdoing.” (QS. Al-'Ankabut [29]: 45)

This verse emphasizes that prayer has a practical orientation that is directly related to the quality of human behavior in daily life, and this verse also shows that prayer has a preventive effect on deviant behavior. According to Ibn Kathir (2004), prayer that is performed consistently and consciously will instill a sense of fear of Allah and encourage the person performing it to stay away from sinful acts. However, the Qur'an also suggests that prayer that is not accompanied by an understanding of its meaning can lose its moral function. Thus, the moral effectiveness of prayer is largely determined by the quality of awareness and appreciation of its values, not merely by the formal aspects of its performance.

In contemporary reality, the moral crisis is reflected in the increase in deviant behavior, the weakening of public ethics, and the dominance of personal interests over collective values. This phenomenon indicates a disconnect between religious practice and the internalization of moral values. In this context, prayer serves as a medium for the internalization of ethical values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and self-control. These values are not only individual in nature, but also have an impact on social behavior. Consistent prayer trains one in regularity of life, awareness of time, and adherence to norms, which are important foundations in the formation of personal ethics.

Fazlur Rahman (1980) asserts that the main purpose of the teachings of the Qur'an is the formation of a moral order rooted in the awareness of tawhid. Therefore, prayer must be understood as a continuous moral education process. If prayer is reduced to a mere formal routine, then its potential for moral transformation will not be realized. This finding reinforces the argument that the contemporary moral crisis cannot be overcome simply by increasing the quantity of worship, but requires a revitalization of the quality and meaning of prayer. Thus, prayer functions as a mechanism for internalizing values that connect awareness of tawhid with concrete ethical behavior in individual lives. Revitalizing the meaning of prayer at the ethical level is key to bridging the gap between ritual piety and moral piety in modern society.

### **The Social Dimension of Prayer and the Formation of Collective Piety**

The results of the analysis also show that prayer has a significant social dimension. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 43 emphasizes the connection between prayer, zakat, and social togetherness. This connection shows that from the beginning, prayer has been placed in a social framework that requires the active involvement of individuals in collective life.

وَأَقِمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَةَ وَأَذْكُرُوا مَعَ الرَّأْكِعِينَ

*“Establish prayer, pay zakat, and bow down with those who bow down.” (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 43)*

This verse shows that prayer does not stand alone as an individual act of worship, but is integrated with social responsibility and human solidarity. According to Quraish Shihab (2002), the command to bow together contains a message of togetherness, equality, and social integration, which are important foundations in building a just society. Thus, congregational prayer can be understood as both a symbol and a concrete practice of forming egalitarian and inclusive social relations.

In the context of modern humanitarian crises such as social inequality, horizontal conflicts, and weakening empathy, prayer has great potential as a means of forming social piety. Congregational prayer, in particular, reflects the value of equality without distinguishing social status, economic status, or cultural background. This shows that prayer not only shapes individual piety, but also collective piety that is oriented towards the common good. This collective piety is reflected in the formation of social solidarity, empathy between individuals, and awareness of shared responsibility in maintaining social harmony.

Furthermore, the integration of prayer and zakat in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 43 emphasizes that spirituality in Islam cannot be separated from social concern. Authentic spirituality is spirituality that gives birth to social responsibility and commitment to justice. In this context, prayer functions as a social glue that connects the dimension of worship with human ethics. Thus, prayer acts as a vehicle for social transformation that instills the values of justice, equality, and care as an integral part of religious experience. This finding reinforces the view

that contemporary social crises cannot be overcome without revitalizing religious practices oriented towards social piety and adherence to human values.

Based on these theological, ethical, and social descriptions, it can be concluded that prayer in the perspective of the Qur'an does not only function as a ritual worship, but as a comprehensive value system. Prayer works simultaneously at the level of individual consciousness, personal moral formation, and social order strengthening, making it relevant as a normative response to the crisis of values that plagues modern society. The spiritual crisis, moral decadence, and social disintegration essentially stem from the weakening of the internalization of transcendental values in everyday life.

In this context, prayer should be understood not merely as a religious obligation, but as an instrument of values (value system) capable of holistically reconstructing the orientation of human life. Therefore, the following discussion will focus on prayer as a Qur'anic value response to contemporary moral and spiritual crises, placing prayer as a normative framework in rebuilding the meaning, ethics, and orientation of modern human life.

### **Prayer as a Value Response to Contemporary Moral and Spiritual Crises**

Based on a comprehensive thematic analysis of the verses of the Qur'an, prayer can be understood as a comprehensive value response to moral and spiritual crises in the modern era. Theoretically, prayer functions as a mechanism for internalizing religious values that shape human life orientation, spiritual awareness, and moral disposition. This perspective is in line with the theory of value internalization in the study of the sociology of religion, which emphasizes the role of rituals in shaping the meaning structure and behavior of individuals (Glock & Stark, 1965).

Within this framework, prayer not only functions as a symbolic expression of religion, but also as a process of value formation that works repeatedly and continuously in everyday life. The periodic nature of prayer rituals allows for the gradual internalization of the values of monotheism, moral discipline, and ethical awareness within individuals. Thus, prayer acts as a spiritual pedagogical medium that instills values through religious experiences directly experienced by the practitioner.

In practical terms, prayer has real implications for character building and strengthening spirituality. Prayer that is performed consistently and consciously can produce individuals who have inner peace, moral integrity, and social awareness. In the context of modern society, which is prone to a crisis of values, prayer acts as a spiritual anchor that stabilizes the orientation of human life.

Contemporary moral and spiritual crises characterized by value relativism, hedonism, and fragmentation of life's meaning demonstrate the need for transcendent and normative values. In this situation, prayer is a Qur'anic response that offers a framework of fixed values amid rapid and often disruptive social change. Through prayer, individuals are guided to repeatedly reflect on their relationship with God, fellow human beings, and social reality, thereby forming an integrative ethical consciousness.

Thus, this study confirms that prayer in the perspective of the Qur'an is not merely a ritual obligation, but a normative and transformational Qur'anic value system. Revitalizing the meaning of prayer thematically and contextually is a strategic key in facing contemporary moral and spiritual crises. A deep understanding of the meaning of prayer is expected to restore the function of this worship as a means of nurturing the whole human being, spiritually, morally, and socially.

The implications of these findings show that efforts to revitalize prayer should not stop at the fiqhiiyah or formal-ritual aspects alone, but must be directed at strengthening the dimensions of meaning, awareness, and internalization of values.

By making prayer the center of value orientation, Islam offers relevant and contextual normative solutions in responding to the modern humanitarian crisis in a holistic and sustainable manner.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that prayer, as understood in the perspective of the Qur'an, is a concept of worship that has a broad and integrative meaning. Prayer is not only positioned as an individual ritual obligation, but as a Qur'anic value system that simultaneously shapes human awareness of God, moral orientation, and social relations. These findings show that the Qur'an places prayer at the center of Muslim character building, connecting the spiritual dimension with everyday ethics.

In relation to the contemporary moral and spiritual crisis that is the focus of this study, prayer appears as a relevant and transformative normative response. Prayer functions as a medium for strengthening awareness of tawhid, which has a direct impact on the formation of ethical attitudes, self-control, and social responsibility. Thus, prayer does not stop at the symbolic realm, but presents a value framework that guides humans in responding to the challenges of modernity characterized by value relativism, individualism, and emptiness of meaning in life.

This study also found that the effectiveness of prayer as a value system is largely determined by the interpretation and appreciation of its meaning. Prayer that is deeply understood plays a role in bridging the gap between ritual piety and moral piety, which has long been an issue in the religious practices of modern society. In this context, prayer functions as a means of internalizing values that connect transcendental awareness with concrete ethical behavior, both at the individual and social levels.

Furthermore, the findings of this study emphasize that prayer has a social dimension that is inseparable from its spiritual and moral functions. The integration between prayer and social responsibility as emphasized in the Qur'an shows that Islamic spirituality is inclusive and oriented towards the formation of collective piety. Therefore, prayer can be understood as an instrument for forming social solidarity, equality, and concern for others, which is relevant for responding to humanitarian problems in the midst of an increasingly fragmented modern society.

Thus, this study confirms that prayer in the Qur'an is a comprehensive and sustainable value framework in rebuilding the moral and spiritual orientation of modern humans. Prayer serves as a meeting point between revelation and social reality, as well as a normative reference in rearranging human relationships with God, fellow humans, and life itself. This conclusion provides a clear picture that strengthening the understanding of prayer as a Qur'anic value system is a strategic step in responding to contemporary moral and spiritual crises in a sustainable manner.

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