

Why We Forget the Purpose of Creation, and Practical Strategies to Counter It

How Does Human Life Fall into Emptiness and Confusion When We Forget the Purpose of Creation?

To forget the purpose of creation and the philosophy of human life is one of the greatest problems and crises facing humanity. All of us spend significant time and energy throughout the day on small and large goals. A student studies for a good grade, an athlete trains to win a medal, and an artist strives to create a masterpiece. However, when we ask ourselves, “What is our ultimate goal in life?”, we often lack a clear and serious answer. It is just like someone sitting behind the wheel and driving for miles without knowing the destination; there is movement, but there is no ultimate end or result.

When we neglect our true destination and the ultimate purpose of our creation, even superficial successes fail to bring us peace. Someone who defines their entire worth in their job, degree, or wealth will feel a sense of emptiness if they face failure or loss. A family whose entire planning is solely for physical comfort will one day realize that they have lost meaning and direction in life. For this reason, in today's society, despite progress in all fields, many people suffer from confusion and spiritual exhaustion. The Holy Quran introduces the purpose of human creation as servitude to God and reaching nearness to Him ¹. Therefore, anyone who forgets this goal and focuses only on short-term, transient goals will inevitably suffer from confusion and emptiness.

To forget the purpose of creation is not merely a personal and internal issue. When a person forgets the reason for creation and the ultimate destination, all their daily

choices, relationships, behaviors, thoughts, and plans are affected. On a broader level, this neglect will also manifest itself in the family and society. When the educational system, media, and public culture forget the main goal, they produce individuals who possess skills and expertise but suffer from a deep identity crisis. For this reason, to forget the purpose of creation is a deep root whose branches extend into our work, education, family dynamics, consumption patterns, recreation, and even our outlook on the future. As a result, the lifestyle of a neglectful person will be completely different from that of a person who remembers the purpose of creation. The former is entangled in endless competition and persistent worry, while the latter places even simple daily tasks like studying, working, or taking care of the family on a meaningful and divine path.

To Forget the Purpose of Creation: Its Different Dimensions

Forgetting and neglect is not always a fleeting and momentary unawareness. Sometimes it becomes so deep-rooted and persistent that it turns into a mental and behavioral habit. In this state, a person might seemingly be engaged in serious and heavy activities, but inwardly, they have distanced themselves from the fundamental questions: “Why am I doing this, and where is it supposed to lead me?” This very distancing from the main and fundamental questions gradually diverts us from the main path.

To better understand this, we can look at two layers of neglect:

-Superficial Neglect

This type of neglect is mostly momentary and quickly becomes apparent, for example, a student whose mind wanders during an exam and loses focus. This kind

of neglect occurs due to a lapse in attention, is temporary, and is usually fixed once the person refocuses on the main task.

-Deep Neglect

In this type of neglect, a person forgets the purpose of creation in the totality of their life. They continue their life path without considering the ultimate purpose of their creation. A person might spend years working hard, studying, building a career, gaining status, starting a family, and even achieving many successes, yet they never ask themselves how the result of all these relates to the purpose of human creation. This form of neglect is more dangerous because the individual feels they are progressing, whereas their path might be completely unrelated to the main destination. The Quran warns about these individuals, stating: “Say, 'Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work'”².

-Structural Neglect

This stage is the most complex of all. Here, not only the individual but the entire society also forgets the purpose of creation and neglects it. In such a society, the ultimate destination of life is pushed to the sidelines. Values, educational systems, media, and even consumption patterns are designed to keep people busy with minor details and superficial competition, taking away their opportunity to think about the true meaning of life. The Holy Quran describes this state: “Rivalry in worldly increase distracted you, until you come to the graves”³. This means that when people forget the purpose of creation, that neglect can become so deeply rooted in society that worldly competition replaces the focus on the ultimate destination.

For instance, many modern educational systems, instead of encouraging young people to think about the “why” of life and the ultimate purpose of human life, only prepare them to pass exams and enter the job market. The media, too, through continuous entertainment and advertising, diverts the mind from fundamental questions such as “Why was I created?”, “What is the ultimate perfection of a human being?”, and “What is the connection between my daily activities and the purpose of creation?” These questions are so important that Imam Ali (Peace be upon him), says: “May God have mercy on the person who knows where they came from, where they are now, and where they are going” ⁴.

Knowing these three layers of neglect helps us understand why some individuals or societies, despite wealth and progress, remain trapped in emptiness and dissatisfaction. The root of the problem is not a lack of resources or personal weakness; the root is self-forgetting, where we forget the purpose of creation. A person who is only experiencing superficial neglect can return to the right path with a little focus and a reminder. However, deep neglect requires redefining one's principles and beliefs, as well as serious reflection on their entire life path. If structural neglect dominates a society, individual awareness will also become difficult, unless, by relying on divine teachings and a spiritual-centered lifestyle, a person can return once again to their roots, their truth, and the purpose of their creation.

Practical Steps to Help Us Not Forget the Purpose of Creation

Human creation is based on a clear goal and destination. In this regard, the Holy Quran states: “I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me” ⁵. To forget the purpose of creation means deviating from this destination and losing the

connection with true self. However, humans are created in such a way that they can always review their path and remember the main destination again. Just as a driver on the road who takes the wrong path can find the right way by checking the map, a person can avoid being neglectful by self-knowledge and conscious choices. Here are some practical steps to help us not forget the purpose of creation:

Step One: Continuously Remembering the purpose of Creation

This remembrance is not achieved merely by reading a text or listening to a speech; rather, it must turn into a daily practice. For example, every night, one can spend a few minutes in solitude and silence contemplating this question: “Which of my actions today aligned with the purpose of creation, and which were unrelated to or even against it?” This simple review gradually changes our life path and our way of thinking over time. This is the very concept of self-accounting, which is highly emphasized in religious teachings. Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (Peace be upon him), says: “How fitting it is for a person to dedicate an hour of the day solely to self-accounting, to see what actions they have done for or against themselves during the day and night” ⁶.

-Step Two: Reshaping the Standards of Lifestyle

A lifestyle is not built just by modifying details; rather, it is made possible by changing criteria. The main criterion in choosing a career, education, and social relationships must be the extent to which these matters bring us closer to God and the purpose of creation. As a practical step for reconstructing criteria, before making any choice, we can ask ourselves: “Does this choice bring me closer to the purpose of creation or push me further away?” Such a criterion changes both individual behavior and gradually influences the family and the surrounding environment.

-Step Three: Choosing Spiritually Mindful Companions and Faithful Communities

Human life is inherently social. If a person finds themselves among friends and in an environment that encourages neglect, it becomes very difficult to stay aware, even if they want to. However, being alongside people who care about the purpose of creation keeps a person on the path and keeps their motivation alive for moving in the right path. The family, educational institutions, and public culture must be rebuilt based on remembering the destination of creation. A society where the remembrance of God is faint will leave its individuals vulnerable to structural neglect.

-Step Four: Referring to Authentic Sources of Knowledge

Authentic sources of knowledge, such as the Quran, the Prophetic tradition, the lifestyle of the Ahl al-Bayt (Peace be upon them), and the friends of God act as a roadmap and a guiding light. They illuminate humanity's path toward the destination and help us not forget the purpose of creation.

Paying attention to the purpose of creation does not mean abandoning the world, but rather using the world to serve the hereafter. Remembering the ultimate purpose causes even the smallest daily tasks to take on an eternal essence and brings us back to our true status in existence. Remembering the purpose of creation, self-accounting, correcting criteria, and connecting with faithful communities are all ways that free a person from neglect and place their life on the path of the purpose of creation.

In your opinion, what is the biggest factor which causes us to forget the purpose of creation in today's human life? Daily entertainments and preoccupations? Economic and livelihood pressures? The culture of consumerism and advertising?

Or the fading of religious and spiritual beliefs? Share your views with us in the comments section.

References

- ¹. Quran, 51:56
- ². Quran, 18: 103,104
- ³. Quran, 102: 1,2
- ⁴. Muḥammad Fayḍ Kashani, *Al-Wafi*. Iṣfahan: Maktabat al-Imam Amir al-Mu'minin al-Āmmah, 1406 AH, v. 1, p. 116.
- ⁵. Quran, 51:56
- ⁶. Abd al-Wahid al-Amidi, *Ghurar Al-Hikam Wa Durar Al-Kalim (Exalted Aphorisms and Pearls of Speech: A Collection of Aphorisms of Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib)*. Trans. Tahir Ridha Jaffer. Qom: Ansariyan Publications, 2012, p. 1619.