

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surah Nuh

Noah · Makki · 28 ayat — reflections on surah 71 of the Qur'an

QURAN

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Surah Nuh

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نوح — Nuh, "Noah". Surah 71 of 114, revealed in Makkah, 28 ayat.
The full text and a recitation are on the web edition at deen2u.com/quran/71/.

ONE

The surah in brief

The story of Nuh's tireless call across centuries—preaching night and day, openly and in secret—shows a prophet's perseverance against stubborn rejection, the people's clinging to their idols, and God's response of the Flood, ending with Nuh's prayer over the wrongdoers.

Surah Nuh recounts the long mission of the prophet Nuh, who called his people for centuries by every means, night and day, in public and in private, only to meet stubborn rejection. It preserves the wording of his call: seek your Lord's forgiveness, for He is ever-forgiving, and He will send rain in abundance, increase you in wealth and children, and give you gardens and rivers, linking material blessing to repentance. Nuh reasons with them from the created order, the stages of their own making, the heavens, the moon and sun, urging them to hope in Allah's grandeur. When they cling to their idols by name, Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq, and Nasr, he finally prays against the wrongdoers while asking forgiveness for himself, his parents, and all the believers.

TWO

Its themes

- Persistence in calling to Allah
- Seeking forgiveness brings blessing
- Signs in creation
- The origin of idolatry
- The prophet's prayer

THREE

Key verses

He said: "O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day:

Qur'an 71:5

My Lord, I have called my people night and day. Ibn Kathir highlights Nuh's tireless variety of approach over centuries as a model of da'wah that never gives up on people.

"Saying, 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving:

Qur'an 71:10

Seek forgiveness of your Lord; indeed He is ever-forgiving. He will send the sky upon you in showers. Al-Sa'di and others draw from this that istighfar is a cause of provision, rain, and offspring.

"What is the matter with you, that ye place not your hope for kindness and long-suffering in Allah,-

Qur'an 71:13

What is with you that you do not attribute to Allah the grandeur due Him, when He created you in stages? A summons to let awe of Allah's craftsmanship reshape how we regard Him.

"And they have said (to each other), 'Abandon not your gods: Abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa', neither Yaguth nor Ya'uq, nor Nasr';-

Qur'an 71:23

They said, do not abandon your gods, Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq, and Nasr. Ibn Kathir reports these were once righteous men whose images later became worshipped idols, tracing how idolatry began.

"O my Lord! Forgive me, my parents, all who enter my house in Faith, and (all) believing men and believing women: and to the wrong-doers grant Thou no increase but in perdition!"

Qur'an 71:28

My Lord, forgive me, my parents, whoever enters my house a believer, and all believing men and women. Even after such rejection, Nuh's heart turns to mercy for the faithful of every age.

FOUR

Reading it closely

Context & character

Surah Nuh is a Makkan surah devoted entirely to the mission of the Prophet Noah — the longest-labouring of the messengers, who called his people for nine hundred and fifty years. It is named simply for him, and it reads almost as a first-person report of a preacher's exhausting, faithful, and ultimately rejected campaign. For the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, embattled in Makka, the surah is a mirror and a consolation: here is a caller who did everything right and was still spurned, until God's judgement settled the matter.

Its character is intimate and pleading. Much of it is Noah's own voice — reporting to God how he called, and then turning to his people to reason, coax, and warn. The mood moves from patient persuasion to sorrowful complaint to a final, sober prayer. It is a study in the psychology of da'wah: what it costs to invite, and what it means when an invitation is refused across a lifetime.

How the surah unfolds

God sends Noah to warn his people before a painful punishment overtakes them (71:1–4). Noah reports his method: he called them night and day, but his calling only drove them further into flight (71:5–6). Every time he called them so God might forgive them, they thrust their fingers in their ears, wrapped themselves in their garments, dug in, and grew grossly

arrogant (71:7). So he varied his approach — calling aloud, then publicly, then privately in confidence (71:8-9), exhausting every register of appeal.

The core of his message is a single, luminous argument built on istighfar (71:10-20): "Seek your Lord's forgiveness — He is ever-forgiving — and He will loose the sky upon you in abundant rain, and reinforce you with wealth and children, and grant you gardens and rivers." Noah then presses the deeper wound: "What is the matter with you, that you do not hope in God's majesty?" — reminding them that God created them in successive stages, set the moon as a light within the heavens and the sun as a lamp, grew them from the earth like plants, and will return them into it and bring them forth again, and spread the earth out as a wide expanse for them. It is a masterclass in linking gratitude for tangible blessings to reverence for the Giver.

Then the tone shifts to complaint (71:21-24). Noah reports that they disobeyed and followed those whose wealth and children only increased their loss; that the ringleaders devised a mighty scheme; and that they clung to their idols, urging one another, "Do not abandon your gods — do not abandon Wadd, nor Suwa', nor Yaghuth, Ya'uq and Nasr." These five named idols are the surah's concrete anchor for the sin of shirk. Noah observes that the leaders had already led many astray.

The surah closes with the outcome and the prayer (71:25-28). For their sins they were drowned and made to enter a Fire, and they found no helper against God. Noah's final supplication is stark: "My Lord, leave not upon the earth a single dweller from

the disbelievers, for if You leave them they will lead Your servants astray and breed only wicked ingrates." And he ends by asking forgiveness for himself, his parents, whoever enters his house as a believer, and for all believing men and women — while asking that the wrongdoers gain nothing but ruin. The severe prayer comes only after centuries of rejection; it is a judgement earned, not a temper lost.

The major themes, in depth

The dominant theme is istighfar as the key to both spiritual and worldly wellbeing. Noah's central pitch (71:10–12) ties seeking forgiveness to rain, wealth, offspring, gardens and rivers — a promise that classical scholars, and the reports about 'Umar and al-Hasan al-Basri prescribing istighfar for drought and barrenness, took at face value. The surah teaches that turning back to God is not merely a private cleansing but the doorway through which His provision flows into a community's fields and homes. Repentance and rain are drawn as two faces of one mercy.

A second theme is the God-consciousness that the created order is meant to awaken (71:13–20). Noah reproaches his people for not "hoping in God's dignity" while surrounded by evidence of it — their own embryonic development "in stages," the ordered lights of moon and sun, their growth from the soil and their return to it, the outspread earth beneath their feet. The passage models da'wah that reasons from the familiar and the visible up to the majesty of the Maker, refusing to let habit dull the wonder of ordinary things.

A third theme is the anatomy of stubborn disbelief and its social machinery. The surah shows rejection as active, physical resistance — fingers in ears, garments pulled over heads, arrogance heaped on arrogance (71:7) — and, crucially, as a chain of imitation: the masses follow wealthy leaders (71:21), and the elders press the young to keep the ancestral idols (71:23). Shirk is sustained less by argument than by inherited loyalty and social pressure, which is why it took a punishment, not a debate, to end it.

Points of reflection

Surah Nuh reframes what "success" means for anyone who calls to good. Noah laboured for centuries, deployed every method — night and day, aloud and in whispers, publicly and privately — and won few. Yet the Qur'an holds him up as a triumphant prophet. The lesson is that the caller is answerable for the sincerity and creativity of the effort, not for the response, which belongs to God. For the Prophet ﷺ in Makka, and for every da'i since, this is deep consolation.

For the individual, the surah plants a single, practical seed: make istighfar a habit. If seeking forgiveness could unlock rain for a rebellious nation, its power to open relief, provision and mercy in a believer's life is greater still. And Noah's closing prayer — for himself, his parents, and all the believers who follow — models how the heart of a servant, even under lifelong hostility, keeps its widest circle of love for the faithful and leaves final justice to God.

FIVE

Carrying it

1. Keep calling to good with patience and varied approaches.
2. Make istighfar a habit; it opens doors to provision and mercy.
3. Let reflection on creation restore your sense of Allah's greatness.
4. Guard against the small steps by which reverence slides into idolatry.

Where this reading draws from. Ibn Kathir, al-Sa'di, al-Tabari. A summary is not a tafsir: for the verse-by-verse treatment go to the works themselves, or to the close studies at deen2u.com/tadabbur/.