Allah subhaanahu wa ta’ala made this world in such a way that Man develops a connection with it from the moment he is born. Even a baby looks around and is affected by the things around him from a very early stage. The first questions that he asks, as soon as he is able to talk, are about the environment. What is this? What is that? He learns the names of things, then learns to use them. And through all the stages of his life he is dependent on the creations of Allah in one way or the other. The food he eats, the water that he drinks, the clothes that he wears are all from the nature around him. Some of us are just using the world and its things to fulfill our needs. Some develop a love for these things for their material benefit and to accumulate them becomes their purpose of life. Yet there are a few who contemplate and reflect upon the purpose of this creation and thus it connects them to the Creator, the almighty Allah.

Surah An-Nahl is actually a reminder from Allah to man, inviting him to take a good look at the world around him. The things that he sees just in a passing glance and never stops to wonder at their complexities and extraordinary designs, are all put to focus in this beautiful chapter of the Quran. This is Islam, the complete code of life: don’t just sit in a corner rolling the beads of a tasbeeh, come out and see the signs of Allah, but be careful, don’t lose the balance, don’t get so entangled in this creation that you forget the Creator.

Look at these verses, just in the beginning:

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He created the heavens and the earth with the truth, highly exalted is He above what they associate (with Him).

Allah is referring to the disbelievers and transgressors who forget their origin (which was a despicable drop) and use their intellect to become arrogant instead of becoming grateful for all the blessings that Allah has created for them. Now in the next several Ayaat we see countless examples of Allah’s splendid creation. See how the Quran shows us a splendid documentary through the meaningful words of Allah:

And He created man from a small seed and lo! he is an open contender.

Allah has also catered for our aesthetic sense:

And there is beauty in them for you when you drive them back (to home), and when you send them forth (to pasture).

as well as transport to unreachable areas:

And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress of the souls; most surely your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful.

Not to forget the beauty of horses apart from their usefulness:
And (He made) horses and mules and donkeys that you might ride upon them and as an ornament

And Allah says that he will create the substitute of these animals, which you do not know: It could be the limos of today or even those vehicles which are yet to come.

and He creates what you do not know

From Animal kingdom, The Quran takes us to the world of plants and their one source: water. Isn't it amazing that from the same earth and same water Allah has produced for us fruits and flowers of various colours and sizes and flavours. Do we ever pause to think before we take a bite of that red apple, how beautifully it reflects the light? Or have we ever wondered why Allah has created so many colours and flavours of Apples or other fruits? And what was the need of such a countless variety of flowers? Just for the pleasure of our eyes? Allah says:

He it is Who sends down water from the cloud for you; it gives drink, and by it (grow) the trees upon which you pasture.

He causes to grow for you thereby herbage, and the olives, and the palm trees, and the grapes, and of all the fruits; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.
And now take a look at the vast sky:

وَسَحَرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالْبَحْرٍ وَالْفَجْرِ وَالْدُّمَامَةَ وَالْفَطَرَ وَالْبُخْرَاتِ بَآمِرِهِ

And He has made subservient for you the night and the day and the sun and the moon, and the stars are made subservient by His commandment; most surely there are signs in this for a people who ponder;

Next we move on to the endless oceans:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَحَرَ الْبَحْرَ لَتُأْكِلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرَابًا وَتُسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حَيَاةً

And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh flesh from it and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships cleaving through it, and that you might seek of His bounty and that you may give thanks.

last but not least, the majestic mountains:

وَأَلْقَى فِي الأَرْضِ رُوَاسِي أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسَبْلًا لَّعِلْكُمْ تَشْكَرُونَ

And He has cast great mountains in the earth lest it might be shift with you, and rivers and roads that you may go aright,

Allah says the list is endless, this is just a glimpse, the fact is that if you were to count these things you would fail to do so:

وَإِنْ تَعْدُوا نَعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوْهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعِفْوُ رَحِيمٌ

And if you would count Allah’s favors, you will not be able to number them; most surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.
It leads us to the one basic truth: the oneness of Allah——

TAUHEED:

إِنَّهُمۡ يَقِيلُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ قَلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرُةَ وَهُمۡ
مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ {22

Your Allah is one Allah; so (as for) those who do not believe in the hereafter, their hearts are ignorant and they are proud.

We see that Arrogance or Takabbar is such an evil that leads to disbelief. Allah says that when these people are asked about the Quran they have this typical response:

وَإِذَا قَالُوا لَهُم مَّاَذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا أُسُئِلْتُمْ أُسَايِرُ الْأَوْلِيَاتِ {24

And when it is said to them, what is it that your Lord has revealed? They say: Stories of the ancients;

But when the same question is put to the God-fearing people, they say:

وَقَيلَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَاَذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا حَيْرًا

...............}

And it is said to those who guard (against evil): What is it that your Lord has revealed? They say, “That which is Good”.

So Allah says that their reward is great, in both the worlds:

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الْدُنْيَا حَسَنَةَ وَلِدَارِ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرَ وَلَنَعْمَ دَارُ
المُتَّقِينَ {30

For those who do good in this world is good, and certainly the abode of the hereafter is better; and certainly most excellent is the abode of those who guard (against evil);
In this Surah we see that Allah is again and again inviting us towards using our intellect. The purpose of Quran has also been stated as such:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْذِّكْرَ لِتَبَيَّنَ لِلَّنَاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعْلَمَهُمْ يَتَفَكُّرُونَ

{44}

and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect.

And the desired effect of this contemplation is submission to Allah. That is what Ibaadah is and that is what we were made for. Allah asks us why do you refuse to prostrate before me? Look at the shadows:

أَوَ لَمْ يَزُوَّدْنَهُ إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِيهِ ظَلَالُهُ عَنْ الْيَمِينِ وَالْشَّمْسَاتِ

سُجَدًا لَّهُ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ

{48}

Do they not consider every thing that Allah has created? Its (very) shadows return from right and left, making prostration to Allah while they are in utter abasement.

In fact the entire universe and all that's within it is in quiet submission to Allah:

وَلَّهُ يَسَجَّدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الدَّابَّةَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ وَهُمُ

لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

{49}

And whatever creature that is in the heavens and that is in the earth makes prostration to Allah (only), and the angels (too) and they do not show pride.

And look at us and our foolishness, that we can't find time for Namaz !! Simply because Allah doesn't punish us immediately for our disobedience, we think that it really doesn't matter ? Look at what Allah is reminding us:
And if Allah had destroyed men for their iniquity, He would not leave on the earth a single creature, but He respites them till an appointed time; so when their doom will come they shall not be able to delay (it) an hour nor can they bring (it) on (before its time).

This is the ultimate truth which has become unimportant in our eyes because we rarely talk about it. It is human nature to attach significance to what he listens to, most of the time. Advertisements of various companies are also based on this principle. The more you hear a jingle or commercial, the more your brain tells you that you should buy that thing, even if you don’t need to. That is why truth is hardly talked about, for fear that it will topple all the towers of falsehood that we have built around it for our worldly benefits. So as Muslims it becomes our duty to promote the culture of healthy conversations which will keep reminding us of the basic fact of our existence. The more we promote the message of Allah the more we will remain in reality and will not fall into the traps of illusions.

Coming back to the wonders of Allah's creation, we have a few verses which take us beyond the surface into the miraculous depths of these creatures. What I found most amazing about it was that Allah gives us the examples of the most ordinary and commonly found creatures, not the extraordinary species shown on National Geographic which most people have no knowledge of. This also shows that Quran is for all people.
And most surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle; We give you to drink of what is in their bellies-- from between the excretion and the blood-- pure milk, easy and agreeable to swallow for those who drink. These are like some miraculous factories that Allah has made so widely available for our use. But have we ever given thanks to the Provider?

After this Allah takes us into another world, the mysterious colonies of the bees!! What could be so important about the Honey-Bee that Allah has named this Surah after it? The following two Ayat give us a glimpse into this amazing creation:

And your Lord revealed to the bee saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build:

Then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from within it a beverage of many colours, in which there is healing for men; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.

We all read and see movies about science and the animal world etc but our study remains incomplete without Allah’s remembrance that it is He who has created these astonishing miracles. Now after reading all this from the Quran if we do a little research, for instance, on the bees, we get an awareness of Allah’s greatness and our own state of ignorance.
As Allah says in the following Ayat:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بَطُولٍ أَمَهَاتَكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيٌّاء وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السُّمَّاعَ وَالأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْتَادَ لَعَلَّكُم تُشْكُرُونَ

And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers-- you did not know anything-- and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you may give thanks.

So we can realize from these words that it is such a huge blessing of Allah that he has bestowed on us these faculties of sight and hearing and intellect. We should use all these to acquire an understanding of Allah and our own purpose of existence in this universe.

Allah tells us now to look at the birds:

أَلَمْ يَرْوَى إِلَى الْطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ فِي جَوْ السَّمَاةِ مَا يَمْسَكْهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Do they not see the birds, constrained in the middle of the sky? None withholds them but Allah; most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.

And also look at all the houses and other comforts that have been designed for us:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّن بَيْوتٍ مُّسَكَّنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّن جُلُودِ الأَنْعَامِ بَيْوتًا تَسْتَخْفِفُونَهَا يَوْمَ ظُعُفَتِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقْامِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَصْوَافِهَا وَأَوْلَاهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا آتَانَا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينَ

And Allah has given you a place to abide in your houses, and He has given you tents of the skins of cattle which you find light to carry on the day of your march and on the day of your halting, and of their wool and their fur and their hair (He has given you) household stuff and a provision for a time.
And Allah has made for you of what He has created shelters, and He has given you in the mountains places of retreat, and He has given you garments to preserve you from the heat and coats of mail to preserve you in your fighting; even thus does He complete His favor upon you, that haply you may submit.

We should have been grateful for all of this but it only increased us in our arrogance towards Allah:

They recognize the favor of Allah, yet they deny it, and most of them are ungrateful.

but how can we change our attitude? It is only possible through the Quran:

and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit.

And so Allah commands us:

Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful.
And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have made a covenant, and do not break the oaths after making them fast, and you have indeed made Allah a surety for you; surely Allah knows what you do.

The message in these verses is so important for us to act upon that they are read regularly in the Khutba of Friday Prayer, but how many of us really know what they mean? And if we don’t know their meaning then how can we ever hope to act upon them? Why are we so carefree? Why don’t we fear Allah?

The Quran tells us the reason:

{ذَلِكَ بَنَاتُهُمُ اسْتَحْبَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُهْدِي الْقَوْمَ ۡكَافِرِينَ} {91}

This is because they love this world’s life more than the Hereafter, and because Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.

{أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمَّعَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ ۡعُفِّفُونَ} {108}

These are they on whose hearts and their hearing and their eyes Allah has set a seal, and these are the heedless ones.

{لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ ٱلْخَاسِرُونَ} {109}

No doubt that in the Hereafter they will be the losers.

But there have also been those who chose to commit themselves to the obedience of Allah. The favorite example with Allah of such a person is of Ibrahim (a.s) Look at how Allah honours him:

{إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ} {120}

Surely Ibrahim was an exemplar, obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists.
And indeed if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient.

وَأَصِبْرُ وَمَا صَبَّرْكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْرُزْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَنَكُّ فِي ضَيْقٍ مَّمَا يَمْكُرُونَ

And We gave him good in this world, and in the next he will most surely be among the good.

Allah knows that people will still find excuses for their choice of discarding religion from their lives, and will find fault with the religion itself. So He tells the Prophet, s.a.w.:

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way.

The same rule applies to all those after the Prophet, who commit themselves to convey the message of Allah to people. This is not an easy task. It requires perseverance and patience under all circumstances. Therefore in the last words of this awesome Surah, Allah advises us:

وَلَنَّ مَن صَبَّرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ للصَّابِرينَ

Grateful for His favors; He chose him and guided him on the right path.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعَمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَذَا هُدًى إِلَى صَرْأَاتٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ
And be patient and your patience is not but by (the assistance of) Allah, and
grieve not for them, and do not distress yourself at what they plan.

Surely Allah is with those who guard (against evil) and those who do good
to others.

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