

To Benefit from the Qur'an

The Qur'an is Allah's choicest gift to humanity. It is the miracle of miracles testifying to the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and the eternal source of divine guidance, healing, light, mercy. It is glad tidings for the Allah-conscious, and a warning for the heedless and the insolent. It contains inexhaustible wisdom; it is the quintessence of the knowledge of both ancients and the moderns, the Decisive Criterion; Spirit from Allah, and revelation from on High on the heart of the Messenger. Finally, it is our rope of salvation, pleader for us or against us on the Day of Final Reckoning. It is therefore imperative that we respond to the Divine Word most appropriately.

Here are a few tips to help us benefit from the Qur'an optimally:

1. Visualize the grandeur of the Word and the august majesty of its Speaker: In order to properly benefit from the Qur'an, it is imperative that our mind and heart be filled with a deep sense of reverence and awe for the Mighty Word and its Author, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all beings, a Word, about which Allah says, "Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain you would see it humbling itself, breaking asunder for awe of Allah." (Al-Hashr: 21)
2. Keep Your Presence of mind: We cannot expect to benefit from the Qur'an unless we pay undivided attention to it; so it is imperative that we dispel all distractions. One may do well to take the necessary steps to induce proper concentration, such as purifying oneself both physically and inwardly, sitting comfortably in a relaxed manner, etc.
3. Reflect: Since the main purpose of reading the Word is none other than reflecting on the message, we ought to reflect upon it. `Ali said, "There is no good in worship without knowledge; there is no good in reading without reflection." That is the reason why we read in the sources that the Prophet, Companions and As-salaf As-salih (righteous early

Muslims) often would repeat the same verse continuously in order to better reflect upon the deeper meanings of the verse.

4. Remove veils and obstacles: Often one is prevented from attaining due reflection because of the many veils and obstacles that stand in the way of appreciating the Qur'an, veils such as the following: (1) Obsession with external rules of recitation/articulation of sounds to such an extent that one is totally pre-occupied with them and is thus distracted from paying due attention to pondering the meanings; (2) Blind imitation of a particular sect or school or ideology and being fanatically attached to it so that one's own preconceived biases or prejudices prevent one from perceiving the deeper meanings of the Word; (3) Persistence in sins or pride whereby the mirror of one's heart becomes rusted so that it is incapable of gaining true spiritual insights; (4) Clinging to a particular work of tafseer so dogmatically that one holds the false view that the author has exhausted the entire meanings of the Qur'an in his exposition, no matter how articulate and profound he may be, for the Qur'an is inexhaustible in its depth.

5. Identify with the meanings of the verses read and respond to them sensitively: When reading the verses about attributes of Allah, bring to mind Allah's incomparable nature and absolute uniqueness. When reading the verses that speak of Allah's creation, think of the manifestation of divine power as revealed in His work, thus being led to recognize Allah's might and glory. When reading the verses describing Paradise, cherish such ardent fervor for it that you spontaneously seek Allah's mercy. When reading descriptions of Hell, you should tremble and pray that Allah keeps you safe from its torments.

6. Visualize that Allah is speaking to you directly through the Qur'an: As the late Dr. Iqbal said, "No advice from anyone benefited me as much as I benefited from the advice of my mother who told me, 'My son, when reading the Qur'an, visualize in your mind that Allah is speaking to you through it!'" This is why Muhammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qurazi, one of the scholars of the generation after the Companions of the Prophet said, "Whoever has received the Qur'an, Allah has certainly spoken to him!"

7. Be sensitive: Imam Al-Ghazali says: In order to benefit from the Qur'an, three of our faculties must participate in the act of recitation, namely, the tongue, the mind and the heart. Thus the tongue articulates the sounds, the mind translates the meanings, and the heart becomes sensitive and receives admonition or counsel.

8. Develop in yourself the qualities of the Servants of the Merciful: The ultimate objective of the revelation is to transform our inner personalities in such a way that we personify the ideals and ethics of the Qur'an. This is why the Prophet was described by `A'ishah as a walking Qur'an. So one must read, reflect on the message, and act accordingly as the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did, thus combining knowledge with practice.

9. Salute the Messenger, the medium of the Word: We cannot detach the Message from the Messenger, for he alone is the interpreter par excellence of the Word and its living exemplifier. Therefore, we ought to consistently send salutations of peace and blessings on him. For without a deep love for the Messenger, we cannot truly appreciate the revelations sent down by Allah to him through the medium of Angel Jibreel. May Allah for ever shower His choicest blessings and peace on His Servant and Messenger Muhammad, his family and companions. And may He grant us all the honor of joining their august company after we depart this transient world. Ameen.”