

Reading the Quran with Our Hearts

Based on Khurram Murad's Way to the Quran

I've really borrowed so heavily from Khurram Murad's book that I did not feel right mentioning my name here. However, this powerpoint was compiled by me. I am solely responsible for any errors. Subheen Razzaqui. Some good points were raised in the Q & A section. One of which was "Should one abandon everything and simply spend one's time in reading the Quran?" That is not the point here, I wish to use this to inspire people and mostly myself. Generally, I find that Islam espouses a wonderful balance in terms of living one's life and spiritual pursuits. So please take this presentation in that context.

Overview

- Motivation for Engaging with the Quran
- Ways to Engage with the Quran
- Eight Strategies to Improve Our Relationship with the Quran

Motivation for Engaging with the Quran

- *“Surely this Quran guides to that which is most upright and gives good news to the believers who do good that they shall have a great reward (Al-Israa 17:9).”*
- *“And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition [or remember it]? (Al Qamar 54:17)”*

Based on the above verses :What are the three types of motivations one can have in reading the Quran?

Answer: Reward, receive admonition, to show gratitude to Allah.

Motivation... (cont'd)

- *“He [Abraham] showed his gratitude for the favors of God, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way... So We have taught thee the inspired (Message), Follow the ways of Abraham the true in faith, and he joined not gods with God (An-Nahl 16:121,123).”*

Ways to Engage with the Quran

1. Memorization (Hifz)
2. Recitation (Tilawah)
3. Understanding (Tafseer)
4. Self-Reflection

1. Sr Nasreen of ICNA Sister's wing says that during Pr. Muh. Time the Sahaba ran 4 halaqas at a time. These were 1-4. Model for us to do the same in our lives.

2. Meaning of : Tilawah is the word that the Qur'an uses to describe the act of its reading. No single word in English can convey its full meaning.

Its primary meaning is to follow.

Its secondary meaning is to read.


Here Murad is referring to Following to 2 ways. He describes Tilawah as the act of reading in which words must follow each other in order for their meaning to make sense. Secondly, He points out that following of the Quran must mean that we learn from the words of the Quran and make it a blueprint for our lives.

"Tilawah or recitation is an act in which your whole person, soul, heart, mind, tongue and body—participates. In short your whole existence becomes involved (p.22)"

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4. On Self-Reflection: The Sahaba used to sit and ponder over the verses of the Quran and see if their actions measured up to the standards set by the Quran.



Strategies to Improve Our Relationship with the Quran

#1 Make it a Goal to Understand the Quran!

- *“A Book We have sent down, [it is] full of blessings, that men may ponder over its messages, and those who possess understanding may take them to heart (Saad 38: 29)(p.74).”*

Perhaps the best strategy that I got from reading Murad's book was that one should respond to each verse that one reads. So if the verse says the Quran is full of blessings to pondered over. One should read it and immediately say/pray..."Oh Allah please make the Quran a source of blessing for me and help me to understand its meaning."

If the verse talks about a ppl that have been punished...then pray to avoid the sins/punishment of those ppl and so on...

In this way, one makes the reading of the quran active and enaging.

#2 See The Quran as a Living Reality in Our Lives.

- Human nature has not changed
- *“And certainly We have explained for men in this Quran every kind of similitude, but most men do not consent to aught but denying (Al-Israa 17:89).”*

“For those who heard it for the first time from the lips of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, the Qur'an was a living reality. They had absolutely no doubt that, through him, Allah was speaking to them. Their hearts and minds were therefore seized by it. Their eyes overflowed with tears and their bodies shivered. They found each word of it deeply relevant to their concerns and experiences, and integrated it fully into their lives. They were completely transformed by it both as individuals and as a corporate body - into a totally new, alive and life-giving entity. Those who grazed sheep, herded camels and traded petty merchandise became the leaders of mankind.”

“We must bring each word of the Qur'an to bear upon our own realities and concerns by transcending the barriers of time, culture and change (p.17)”

The historical stories of the Quran are more relevant than we think because the essence of human nature has not changed over time. We still feel the same range of emotions.

#3 See the Quran as a Mercy from Allah

- *“And when the **Quran** is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you.*
- *And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and the evening and be not of the heedless ones.*
- *Surely those who are with your Lord are not too proud to serve Him, and they declare His glory and throw themselves down in humility before Him (Al-A'raf 7: 204-207).”.*

1. Think of ways to actively respond to these verses as suggested by the notes in slide 7.
(I might say...pls make me recite the Quran and make me listen to it and get mercy from you Almighty.)

What could you say for the next two verses?

2. Read these verses: What do believers have to do to receive Allah's Mercy?
(answer: listen to Quran, remember their Lord humbly, etc)

#3 Mercy (cont'd)

- Allah taught us about Himself, this life and our purpose in it.
- *“O men! There has come to you an exhortation from your Lord, **healing for what is in the hearts**, and a guidance, and a mercy for believers. Say: In [this] bounty of Allah, and in His mercy - **in it let them rejoice. It is better than whatever they amass** (Yunus 10: 574).”*

#3 Mercy (cont'd)

- Healing
 - *"... healing for what is in the hearts ..."*
 - Imam Shafi's story
- Happiness
 - *"... in it let them rejoice. It is better than whatever they amass ..."*
 - Imam Abu Hanifa's story

The Following explanation of this verse 10:574 is by Sr. Nasreen's Urdu audio tapes of Tafseer produced by ICNA Sister's Wing, N.Y.

On healing. The Quran has spiritual and physical healing powers. Hadith narrated by Abu Syed Qudri. A man came to the Pr. Muh and said my heart aches from pain. Pr. Said read the Quran it is a shifa (cure) for what is in the heart.

Imam Shafi's Story: When he was young he asked his teacher Hazrat Wakir.... Give me a prayer that will strengthen my memory for I have become forgetful. He was told: "Stay away from disobeying Allah and stay away from sin. These are the cures for your memory."

Sr nasreen on happiness: If you want to be happy- be happy because you have the Quran. The wealth of the Quran is much better than the wealth of this world.

Imam Abu Hanifa's Story: He gave his son Hamad's Quran teacher 1,000 dirhams for teaching him Sura Al Fatiha. This surprised the teacher because it was a very large sum of money. When Imam Abu Hanifa heard that the teacher was wondering about this generous gift, he went to the teacher and said. " By teaching my son the Fatiha, you've given him something more precious than anything else in the world. By God, if I had more wealth- I would have given it to you and felt happy about it.

#4 Have the Right Intentions When You Read the Quran.

- Guidance from Allah
- Draw closer to the Divine
- Catalyst for change in our lives

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Don't acquire knowledge that doesn't translate into actions.
---Islam is an orthopraxy not an orthodoxy.
- Don't read it to justify your preconceived notions and ideas.
- Don't read it for worldly acclaim.

1. Greek "orthos" correct. Praxis "action" Doxa means opinion. Orthopraxy means correct action that is a result of belief. Orthodoxy means correct belief. So belief without action is flawed.

Story of Ann Hutchinson: Christianity had a similar debate as to what would save one from the hell fire. The Covenant of Grace or the Covenant of Good Deeds. Ann Hutchinson rejected "The Covenant of Grace...as in belief alone would be enough for salvation." She believed in "the Covenant of Good Deeds" as in deeds would lead to salvation. Her belief was so controversial that she was asked to leave her community. Her travel away from her community with her followers...is the route of the Hutchinson Parkway in N.Y.

2. Murad states beautifully: You might hear the echo of your own voice and miss out on the echo of Allah's words.

3. Hadith quoted by Murad. He who teaches the Quran/ Deen for worldly praise and fame will be resurrected on the day of judgment with a face without flesh.

The Seed Analogy



- Purpose and intentions are like a seed in your soul. "Many seeds look alike, but as they begin to grow and bear fruits, their differences become manifest. The purer and higher the motive, the greater the value and yield of your efforts."
- "So always ask yourself: Why am I reading the Qur'an? Tell yourself constantly why you should. This may be the best way to ensure the purity and exclusiveness of purpose and intention (p. 29)."

After you read the quotation. Answer the following.

Murad says that your motives are like good seeds which yield taller trees.

So point to the tree (in the corner picture) that represents the tree with the purer motive.

#5 Realize That You May Not Understand Everything

- Trust that the entire Quran is true:
- "This does not imply blind faith without thinking or questioning the realities of life or the Quran message."
- "You have every right to enquire, reflect, question and understand what it contains; but what you cannot fully comprehend is not necessarily irrational or untrue (p.32)."

Realize... (cont'd)

- The Mine Analogy



Murad uses a good analogy to explain the previous concept.

The Mine Analogy: In a mine where you believe that every stone is a priceless gem you won't throw away those that you might not like as much as others or ones for which you don't have the tools to examine their value with right then and there.

#6 Pray that the Treasures of the Quran are Revealed to You.

- *“Our Lord! Let not our hearts swerve [from the Truth] after You have guided us; and bestow upon us Your mercy, indeed You alone are the Bestower (Al 'Imran3: 8) (p.36).”*
- *“I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls Me; so let them respond to Me and have faith in Me, so that they go right (Al Baqarah 2:186)(p.54).”*

#7 Remember that the Quran is a Conversation Between You and Allah.

- Quran answered concerns of people:
Example of Khalwa.
- An implicit conversation in our reading of the Quran in our Prayer :
Hadith Qudsi

Allah is speaking directly to you through the message of the Quran.

While the Quran was being revealed, it answered the concerns of particular Muslims. Example of Khalwa. There was a Pre-Islamic practice by which a husband could announce that his wife was like his mother. This statement (known as zihar) would suspend all intimate relations with his wife. She would no longer be his wife...but was not divorced or free to remarry. This put women in a compromised state of suspension personally and socially. Khalwa's husband had done this to her. She came to the Pr. Muh. To ask if this was unfair according to Islam. The Pr. Muh said that while it seemed unfair, there was no revelation on this matter. Allah then revealed (Sura Mujadila 58:1-2). Which states: "God has heard the words of she who disputes with you regarding her husband and made her complaint to God. God hears your conversation. Verily God is All hearing, All Seeing." The verse goes on to denounce zihar as a baseless practice. Taken from Dr. Mattison's Book The Story of the Quran. Pg 2. She makes the point that the beauty of the Quran is that it was revealed for the whole community while it still addressed the prayers/needs of individuals. Bibi Ayesha knew of this story and that is why she appealed to Allah when the matter of her character was questioned.

A Story From Imam Ghazali's Iyha: "[Al-Ghazali in his Iyha talks about a person who said: " I read the Quran but did not find sweetness in it. Then I read it as if I was hearing it from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), while he was reciting it to his Companions. Then, I moved a stage further and read the Q. as if I was hearing it from Jibrail (a.s.) while he delivered it to the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Then God brought me to a further stage- I began reading it as if I was hearing it from the Speaker. (quoted on p. 44)" This type of attitude might help us savor the Quran personally.

Khurram Murad explains this concept of a conversation between you and Allah beautifully when he says [The Qur'an contains God's words, addressed to you and meant for you. Though those words are on your lips and inscribed on your heart, they are yet a dialogue between God and man, between Him and you. This dialogue takes many forms. It may be explicit or it may be implicit in the sense that a response is implied from you or Him. (p.44)"] For us this implicit conversation take place in our reading of the Quran in our

Hadith Qudsi

- “[the fruits] of prayer are shared equally between Me and My servant, and My servant will be granted what he asked for. As he recites: “Praise be to God,” God would say: “My servant has praised Me.” As he recites: “The Merciful, the Compassionate,” God would say: “My servant has thanked me.” As he recites: “Master of the Day of Judgment,” God would say: “My servant has glorified Me and surrendered to Me.”

Hadith Qudsi (cont'd)

- As he says: "You alone we worship, and You alone we turn to for help," God would say: "This is between Me and My servant, and /my servant will receive what he has asked for." And, as he says: " Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have favored, not those who have incurred Your wrath, nor those who have gone astray," God would say: "This is for My servant, and he will be granted his wish." (Sahih Muslim)

The Writer Muhammad Ghazali expands on this beautifully in his book a Thematic Commentary of the Quran. He says that just like the body needs repetitive cleaning to wash away its dirt. We need to repeatedly recite Sura Fatiha in our prayers to cleanse away the spiritual dirt we acquire in our day to day lives.

#8 Renew Your Commitment to the Quran

- Acknowledge what truly distracts you.
- Hamza Yusuf "Satan's bag of tricks!"
- Michael Sells talks about intellectual idolatry.
- Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf "Whatever gets in the way of your La illaha illalallah will always be a source of problems for you."
- Shaykh Abdul Sattar : "Anchor It Strategy"



Many Scholars have offered insights as to how one can renew one's commitment to the Quran and steer clear of what distracts us:

Shaykh Hamza Yusuf: In one of his lectures discusses the concept of "Satan's Bag of Tricks". He says that self doubt is from the satan. As long as a Muslim follows the message of Islam and its teachings, one should be confident in one's decisions. He says that we should examine ourselves and see which of our behaviors and thoughts negatively effect our quality of life. If one is prone to being a worry-wart/depressed/ungrateful one should realize these are mental tricks that the satan uses to keep us from being content and firm in the decisions we make.

Professor Michael Sells: In one of his interviews for PBS said that Islam takes the concept of Tawheed (oneness of God) so seriously that if one spends the majority of one's thoughts preoccupied by concepts/issues other than God- one could be engaged in "intellectual idolatry." For only God is truly worthy of our thoughts and attention.

Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf: I once heard him say that whatever gets in the way of understanding of "There is No God but Allah" will be a source of distraction and problems for you. I found this to be a very profound statement. For example, I know I am a people pleaser and that sometimes by desire to spend time with people makes me neglect my worship. At other times, my relationships with people can cause me stress/anxiety. Hence, if I listened to what Imam Faisal is saying I would do a better job balancing my time vis a vi my worship and my relationships. Perhaps then, I would be more spiritually centered and the normal drama that comes with relationships would not cause as much anxiety.

Shaykh Abdul Sattar: The Anchor it Strategy is simple yet effective. This is mentioned in Shaykh Sattar's youtube talk on "The Quran the Essential Ingredient." If you want to develop a habit of reading the Quran then anchor it to something else that is a habit (i.e. Isha Prayer).

Quotation by Muhammad Iqbal

“ A hundred new worlds lie in its verses.
Whole centuries are involved in
its moments. ”

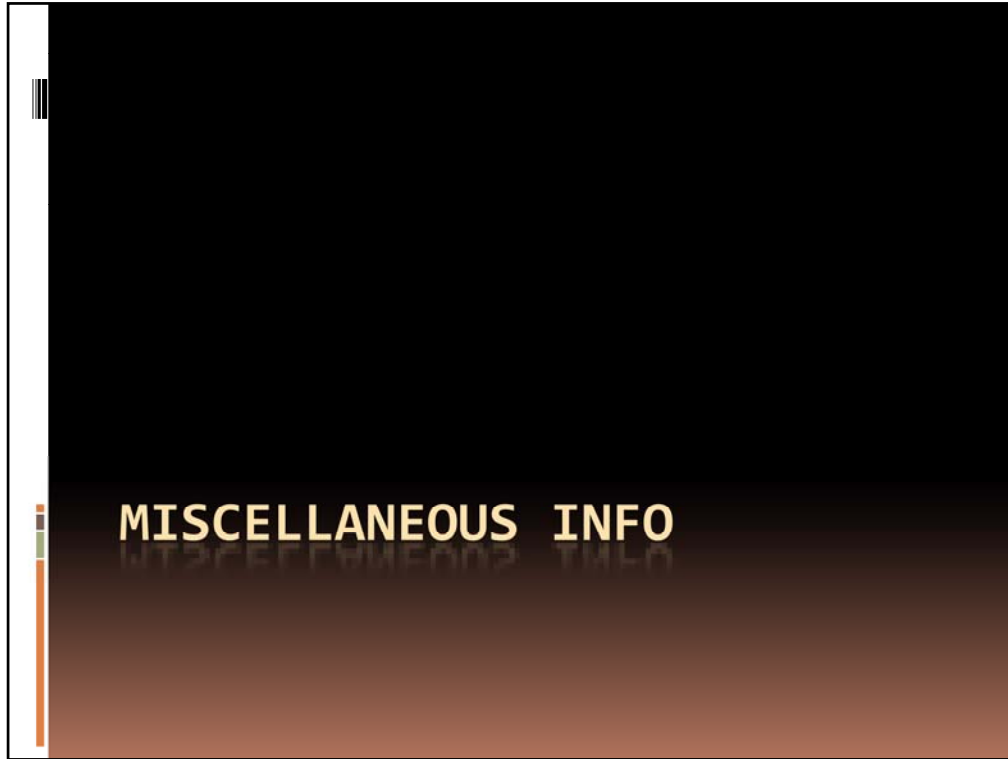
To be read before this slide. “ It is crucial for you because, as you travel through the Quran, at every step you will be summoned to choose, and to commit to Allah. To read the Quran is nothing less than to live the Quran willingly, sincerely, devotedly, and totally. The outcome of your entire life depends on how you heed the call given by God. The journey is therefore, decisive for your existence, for mankind, for the future of human civilization. (Murad P. 18))”

Summary

1. Make it a Goal to understand the Quran
2. See the Quran as a living reality in our lives
3. See the Quran as a mercy from Allah
4. Have the right intentions when you read the Quran
5. Realize that you may not understand everything
6. Pray that the treasures of the Quran are revealed to you
7. Remember that the Quran is a conversation between you and Allah
8. Renew your commitment to the Quran

Any mistakes in this presentation are solely mine. Please feel free to email me (at subheenrazzaqui@yahoo.com) any corrections or comments. This is certainly a work in progress. I did not mean to misrepresent the scholars I quoted. So Please excuse me and I pray that whatever is truthful and beneficial in this presentation sticks with us. And whatever is misleading or incorrect, may Allah cause us to forget it and/or rectify it.





The following slides were not included in the presentation...but were interesting. These are based on Khurram Murad's Book

How to Understand the Quran

- “That Men may ponder over (il yaddabbaru) its revelations and ...may take them to heart (il yatadhakkara) (Sad 38:29). p. 77)”

Two ways to understand the Quran

- Tadhakkar
 - "to receive admonition, gain advice, remembering and taking to heart."
 - Easy approach for all of us.
 - We should aim to do this and Tadabbur. An overlapping approach is best (p.77).
- Tadabbur
 - Finding the full meaning of every word, ayah, Surah, metaphor and parable you read.
 - Entails the study of Tafseer, historical context of revelation, linguistics, etc.
 - Scholarly approach , takes longer (p.78).

Specific Methodology for Quranic Exegesis

- Understand that the Quran has a unity within itself.
- Tafseer of the Quran:
 - by the Quran.
 - by the Sunnah of The Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.).
 - by the Companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.).
 - by the Arabic Language
 - by opinion if it doesn't contradict the above four.*

taken from article "An Introduction to the Quran: Organization and Meaning",
www.islamreligion.com