

Beginner's guide to the Qur'aan (part 3 of 3)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

How should I approach the Qur'aan?

(1) Read Qur'aan with Proper Intention

In order to be guided by the Qur'aan and to receive reward, a Muslim must read it solely for the sake of Allaah's pleasure – to be guided by the Qur'aan. First, it should not be to win praise of people. Second, it should be a sincere reading to find and follow the truth,

(2) Choose good time and place, read attentively, and ponder

The Qur'aan must be read with a clear mind and in a proper setting. Choose the best time to read the Qur'aan. One which is conducive to contemplation. Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

["Indeed, in this [Qur'aan] is a reminder for those who have a heart or give ear while they are heedful."]¹

First, a person must have a receptacle ready to receive the message – the 'heart.' If this receptacle is not open to the message, it will not 'receive' anything even if the lips move. Second, 'give ear' is one who listens intently, trying to comprehend what is being said. Third, 'heedful' means that his heart is present and in tune with what is being said. If all conditions are present, the person will benefit from the Qur'aan and it will guide him. It must be kept in mind that pondering in itself is not the goal; it is a means to apply the teachings of the Qur'aan in one's life.

(3) Let the Qur'aan decide true and false

Allow the Qur'aan to guide you. Let it show you the straight path. Approach it with an open mind. If a person has their mind already made up, they will look to the Qur'aan to find support for their views, and the Qur'aan will never guide them, for it never had the opportunity. A new Muslim needs to change their views and attitudes according to the Qur'aan, not to interpret it to suit one's preconceived notions. Approach with humility, consciously setting aside what you have been inculcated with from your culture and traditions, taking on the new text as something fresh and new. Allow it to lead you, rather than try and mould it to your previously learned patterns of belief.

¹ Qur'aan [50:37]

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(4) Realise everything in Qur'aan is true

[“And whose word can be truer than Allaah’s.”]²

Whatever the subject, Allaah says the truth. Whether it is related to the Unseen World, life after death, history, natural law, sociology, or anything else, it all comes from our Lord. Sometimes a person may read something and feel that it is contrary to what occurs around him. In such a case, the beginner should realise that they either misunderstood what the Qur'aan is saying, requiring them to seek a better understanding, or that their perception of what they are reading is skewed by their upbringing. It is essential for a new believer not to doubt a verse due to their lack of comprehension, and be confident of their religion and its truth. Grow with the Qur'aan, seek the explanation from genuine Islaamic scholars, the men and women of learning, and consult recognised commentaries (tafseer) such as that of ibn Katheer.

(5) The Qur'aan addresses you

Realise the Qur'aan has been revealed for you. Allaah is talking to you directly. The Qur'aan was not just revealed for Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) and his companions, but rather for every person till Judgment Day. It is the word of the Ever-Living God, eternally valid, and addresses people of all times. When Allaah issues a command, it is addressed to you. It is your personal guide, a healing for the diseases of your soul. Every single passage has a message for you. Every attribute of Allaah asks you to build a corresponding relationship. Every description of life after death asks you to prepare for it. Every description of Paradise encourages you to aspire for it, every description of Hell impels you to seek protection from it. Every character is a model to either emulate or avoid. Every dialogue involves you. Every legal injunction, even if inapplicable to your situation, has some message for you. This realisation will keep your heart awake. The famous companion, Abdullah bin Mas'ood (*May Allaah be pleased with him*), said:

“When it says, ‘O you who believe...,’ you must listen closely, as it is either ordering you to what is good for you or prohibiting you what is bad for you.”

(6) Release the text from constraints of time and space

The Qur'aan is a living text with relevance to modern life. Without doubt many verses in the Qur'aan have a historical context; they refer to certain people or a specific incident. The historical context is important to understand some verses correctly. But the examples and moral lessons are relevant to our lives and provide guidance for our own time and context. The realisation will make the person realise that even though the Qur'aan is talking about an ancient nation, its moral lessons apply to current events.

² Qur'aan [4:87]