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IN THE SHADE OF

# Ramadan

SEASON 10

## Discussion Guide

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## Getting Started

This episode discussion guide may be utilized in families and gatherings to deepen engagement with season 10 of In the Shade of Ramadan. This year's theme is a Toolkit for Bonding with the Quran.

To maximize benefits

- Check out our landing page for Ramadan 2021: [muslimamericansociety.org/ramadan2021](https://muslimamericansociety.org/ramadan2021)
- Follow MAS' social media channels to view episodes as they are released, and to discover other programming (including podcasts, Instagram Takeovers, and a live Iftar Show)
- Subscribe to the [season\\_playlist](#) on Youtube
- Sign up for an account on QuranReflect.com to access our episode discussion guide and read reflections and deeper discussion on the episodes! Episode-related discussion and resources can be found at [mas.quranreflect.com/isr](https://mas.quranreflect.com/isr)

# Episode 1

## Bond with the Quran

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ  
“The true believers are those whose hearts tremble at the remembrance of Allah,  
whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord.” (8:2)

Hope to feel alive again? Breathe again? Cry again? Every broken device should be returned to its maker for repair. The words of God are the manual to our heart. But what if we have difficulty understanding the Quran? How can we make our time with the Quran more impactful? In this series, we'll discover the small tips and tools that help us bond more deeply with the Quran. Small steps, big strides in faith.

### Discuss

- Um ad-Darda' said, "The shivering of the heart is like the burning of a palm leaf." That's how she described the shivering or trembling mentioned in the verse quoted above (8:2). What emotions have you felt before when reading the Quran? What words would you use to describe them?
- What emotions compel you to pick up the Quran and try to seek answers from it?
- Recount all of the benefits that the Quran can bring to us in our daily lives and in our faith. Continue reading below to uncover even more benefits of the Quran.

### Practice

- Read or listen to something about the beauty and wonder of the Quran to get yourself in the proper state of mind to connect with the Quran this Ramadan. Some suggested resources:
  - [Faith First](#) by Magdy Al-Hilali (pgs. 137-217 specifically on how to connect with the Quran)
  - [Last year's season of In the Shade of Ramadan](#)
  - [Way to the Quran](#) by Khurram Murad
  - Abdul-Nasir Jangda's lecture [What is an Ayah?](#)
- Sign up for an account on [QuranReflect.com](#) and explore the numerous insightful reflections people have shared about verses in the Quran, witness the love and passion others have found in Quranic reflection, and write your first post! Check out the MAS page at [mas.quranreflect.com/isr](http://mas.quranreflect.com/isr) to discover more reflections around this series.



## Read more

People who neglect the Quran are truly disadvantaged, wasting their efforts searching for some other way to reach God. Can you imagine the regret they will feel upon realizing what was in front of them the whole time! They spent so much time and energy looking for a path to God, coming up with all sorts of arbitrary routines and theories, but refusing to see how easy the Quran makes it. Some of us are impressed by these alternate routes to God, out of a sincere hope to come closer to Him. We might follow their regimens, hoping to find a faster route to God, but after a while we look down and find that we have not moved an inch. Ibn al-Qayyim draws our attention to this when he says:

You must first remove your heart from being settled in this world to living in the next. Then expose it to the meanings of the Quran, uncover its hidden gems and contemplate upon it. You must understand what its objectives are and study its context, taking the time to look carefully into every single ayah for a cure for your heart. This, in reality, is the most direct, easy and accessible approach to the Highest Company. It is a safe path, protecting those who tread it from fear of any danger, sparing them the risk of hunger, thirst, and diseases that lie waiting for those who choose other paths. Allah placed on this path a guardian to protect and defend its travelers. Those who have been around, treading other paths and surviving their dangers, know the true value of this path. (Tahtheeb Madarij as-Salikeen, 293)

As Khabbāb bin al-Arat once said, “Come near to Allah however you can, but you will never come closer to Him through anything more beloved to Him than His own words.”

*(Excerpt from Faith First by Magdy Al-Hilali, pgs. 135-136)*



## Episode 2

# Take Your Time

Sometimes in our race to the finish line to complete the Quran in the month of Ramadan, we lose the point of the journey. We zip through pages and surahs without stopping to reflect or understand the words. The companion Ibn Mas'ood once said, "Let your goal not be the end of the surah." Choose depth over distance. The Prophet's ﷺ recitation was gentle and thoughtful, to the point that someone listening to him would be able to make out every single letter that he pronounced.

Whether you read from a translation or the Arabic words, give your heart and mind a chance to keep pace with your reading. Slow down and immerse your senses in recitation. Every letter has a reward, it's true, but that's because the letters are the medium through which meanings enter the heart.

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلاً

Or a little more, and Recite the Quran in a measured way. (74:3)

## Discuss

- How would you redefine your goals with the Quran in light of the advice in this episode?
- The companions also memorized slowly and made sure the verses were fully understood and applied. How can you redefine your goals of memorization in light of this?
- Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, described the Prophet ﷺ recitation as "deliberately clear, with each letter distinct from the next." Hafsa, may Allah be pleased with her, said that, "he would recite a surah so slowly and measured that it would seem longer than a surah of greater length." (Faith First, 170) If you truly slowed down and allowed every word to be absorbed and internalized, how might that change your relationship with the Quran?
- Imam Al-Ghazali talks about the role of the heart, the mind, and the tongue in recitation. Each has its job-- he said, "The tongue's duty is to pronounce the letters correctly and recite as beautifully as it can." When you struggle to apply rules of tajweed, working hard to pronounce correctly, think about how that might impact your recitation? What is the job of the mind and the heart?

## Practice

- Choose your favorite short Surah. Practice drawing out your recitation, reading it slowly, repeating it several times, thinking about each word, looking up the meanings, and perfecting your pronunciation as best as you can.



## Read more

Some of us believe that failing to complete the entire Quran in a month is tantamount to sin. While we should indeed occupy ourselves with the Quran and recite on a consistent schedule, making sure that a single day does not pass without reciting the Quran therein, there is no mandate to complete the entire recitation of the Quran in any specific time frame. Even the Companions, who dedicated their lives to the Quran, differed in how long it took them to finish reciting it in its entirety. Abu Dawud reported that the strongest among the Companions of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم would recite the Quran in seven days, while others would recite it in a month, others in two months, and others in even longer periods than that.

This is obviously not a license to drag out your completion of the Quran, but rather a reminder to set sustainable goals. There is tremendous benefit in reading daily and completing readings of the entire Quran periodically, but there is no deadline for that completion. When you are not forcing yourself to meet some self-imposed quota, the quality of the time spent reciting the Quran will make you naturally want to increase your daily amount, instead of burdening you.

*(Excerpt from Faith First p. 170-170)*

## Episode 3

# Clear the Clutter

For the Quran to actualize its potential for transformation, we have to get the setting right. Plan ahead for your appointment with Allah. Choose an optimum environment and time for your daily recitation. Try reading Quran in the earliest morning or during the night's blanketing stillness. It's good to recite and listen to the Quran during the hustle of our day: in the car, on our phone, or right before we fall asleep. But make sure to create a space for the Quran, when you are not exhausted or distracted. Don't give Allah the leftover scraps of your time.

### Discuss

- Think about your relationship with the Quran, prayer and good deeds in light of the quote, "Don't give Allah the leftover scraps of your time." Does this apply to you and in what ways?
- Is there a place and time when you feel the Quran touches you more?
- We can use specific times and events in our day as cues to initiate a Quran habit. As part of improving your Ramadan routine, can you identify what cue you will connect your Quran recitation to?

### Practice

- Think about your daily routine and select the best time of day for your appointment with the Quran. Add a daily reminder to yourself of your upcoming appointment, just as you do for other important commitments.



## Read more

We'll find that when we immerse ourselves in a calm setting, the sacredness of the Quran seeps into our consciousness. Quiet and stillness heightens our sensitivity. When our environment is tranquil, we are less inhibited in expressing our emotions, allowing the words of God, if we are so inclined, to wring our hearts dry and draw out our tears. The most genuine prayers will flow from our tongues without even having to calculate what it is we should be praying for.

Part of creating an environment conducive to benefiting from the Quran is selecting the right time to recite. We're conditioned to view our time with the Quran as secondary to our studies, jobs, and our leisure time. Reciting the Quran is reserved only for our spare time—that is, any time left over after working, eating, scrolling through endless media feeds, and making sure we catch up on our favorite television series. Maybe you play your favorite Quran recitation while driving, with your mind swinging between the road (where it should be), your daily tasks, and maybe every so often how beautiful that ayah that just played is. Or perhaps you complete your daily portion of recitation while commuting on the bus or train, trying with all your might to keep your eyes on the page despite the blur of passing bodies in the peripheries.

Some of us might delay our recitation until we're lying in our beds at the end of the day; while the quiet environment may be appropriate, your fatigued mind no longer has the capacity to engage with anything on a substantial level. Listening to the Quran while occupied with a physical or mental task is acceptable and helps us reap some benefits, but it should not be the basis of our primary conversation with the Quran. Give the Quran a time of day when your heart is active, your mind is fresh, and you can be focused on the meanings of God's words.

Don't forget, as well, to make wudu and brush your teeth before reciting. Aside from any technical rulings that may be relevant here, this is an effective practical step to prepare yourself both physically and psychologically to recite God's scripture. Cleanse your body to hold His book, freshen your breath to recite His words, and build within yourself a sense of respect and honor for the source of humanity's guidance.

*(Excerpt from Faith First p. 168)*

## Episode 4

# Do the Math

Allah says in the Quran,

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَمٍ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ  
*If all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean were ink, refilled by seven other oceans, the Words of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. 31:27*

Try to grasp the magnitude and worth of the words, even if you cannot understand all of them, for a sense of awe opens the pathways of the Quran's transformative power.

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأُمُثُلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ  
*Had We sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have certainly seen it humbled and torn apart in awe of Allah. We set forth such comparisons for people, so perhaps they may reflect. 59:21*

## Discuss

- Have you ever contemplated why the Qur'an is in the order that it is? The number of chapters, verses, pages? What is the wisdom in this precision?
- Take the words jannah (Paradise) and Nar (Hell):
  - How many different Arabic words are used in the Qur'an as names for each?
  - Why are certain names for each used in certain verses?
  - There is a reason, a wisdom, an opportunity to ponder and reflect when one word is chosen by Allah (swt) in one place, and a different word is used in another place.



## Practice

- Take your favorite long ayah or short surah, and extrapolate the nouns and adjectives Allah uses in that particular ayah/surah ... and ponder on them.
- Find a specific word from a verse that inspires you and search for it elsewhere in the Quran.
- Select one short verse and think of the hadith, “[Whoever recites a letter] from Allah's Book, then he receives the reward from it, and reward of ten the like of it. I do not say that Alif Lam Mim is a letter, but Alif is a letter, Lam is a letter and Mim is a letter.” (Tirmithi) Count how many rewards are contained in the verse. Then contemplate the multitude of benefits and wisdom that can be gained from the meanings. Imagine every letter in the verse calling out to you to heed these words. Imagine millions of souls who have read and wept over these words, and the many more who ignored them, and are now lamenting in their graves. Consider the dimensions of meaning that come from connecting the verses before and after. Imagine the mountain crumbling under the weight of His words, and the angels and all of creation in the sky and sea straining to hear the words that were given to humankind by Allah, The Almighty. Explore all of these methods, and others, to assign greater weight in your mind to the words of the Quran.

## Read more

The Quran is our scripture. It is the miracle which God chose to give to our Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It is the source of our honor and strength. It has the power to transform the lives of those who dedicate themselves to it, refining them to be God-centered (rabbaniyoon) servants. God instructs us to contemplate over the Quran in order for its objectives to solidify in our minds, its effects to settle in our hearts, and its lessons to manifest on our limbs. Allah, Exalted, says, “(This is) a blessed Book which We have revealed to you (O Prophet) so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.” [38:29]

Merely reciting the Quran’s words carries a great reward. Without contemplation, however, the element of transformation is lost. Failing to contemplate over the Quran also puts our spiritual state at a great risk. God says, “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” [47:24] ...

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Prayer is a light, charity is a testament, and patience is illumination. The Quran is a proof, either for you or against you.”(Muslim) To take it even further, Ibn Umar said, “Every single letter in the Quran calls out to its reader, ‘I am a messenger from God to you, so act upon me and take heed of my warnings!’” Every time you sit down to read the Quran, you rise from your seat having either profited or lost, as one scholar from the early generations warned. This is related to the ayah, “We send down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.” [17:82]

(Excerpt from Faith First p. 146-147)

## Episode 5

# Daily Prescription

Our soul needs the Quran, like our bodies need sunlight, like our lungs need oxygen. It is as important to our wellbeing, or more important, than brushing our teeth, or exercising, or taking our vitamins. The Quran is a divine prescription that must be consumed daily; missing even one day of reading has detrimental effects. Think of a daily Quran habit as your life coach. Read further to explore all of the ways that the Quran enhances and sustains us during our day.

### Discuss

- We are constantly being bombarded by new ideas, products, and people, each coming with its own test and trial. We live in an environment where our hearts are being attacked and require constant healing. What are you doing to protect your heart against this influx of challenges?
- Ibn Taymiyah was imprisoned and prevented from reading any books. He decided to dedicate his entire time in prison to reciting the Quran, and said about his experience, "In this fortress of solitude and seclusion, God has opened up to me many of the Quran's meanings. He has granted me a foundation in knowledge that so many other scholars wish they had. I regret wasting so much of my time with anything but the Quran!" (FF p. 16) Reflect on how busy you think you are and how that may have led you to neglect the Quran.
- Our phones give us a weekly report of how we spend our time online. What if we had a similar report on our time with the Quran? Picture what your results would like. How would it reflect on us and how we are prioritizing our time? Just like a small activity accumulates into several hours at the end of the week, imagine how a daily appointment with the Quran would accumulate and impact us positively over weeks and months.

### Practice

- Come up with a list of the excuses you make that prevent you from reading the Quran every day. Write them down so you fully see them and are forced to articulate them. Think about these excuses and what it says about your priorities.
- Make sincere dua to Allah today that He help you establish a daily habit with the Quran, and that He plant in your heart love and attachment to the Quran.

## Read more

In order to advance beyond just reciting the Quran with our tongue, you must be patient and persistent. Some hard work will be required - nothing ventured, nothing gained. As this chapter lays out the various recommendations that prepare you to be moved and shaken by the Quran, examine your motivations. Are you ready to stick to the plan and not give up at the first sign of resistance? The most essential component of the plan is an uncompromising commitment to a daily Quran habit. This daily appointment is indispensable to having a meaningful relationship with God's revelation. In order for the Quran to have its effect, you must frequent your contact with it and increase the quality time you spend in its presence. Daily exposure to the Quran is as essential for your soul as sunlight is to your body. Giving up even one day of recitation has detrimental effects. Below are some of the effects of daily Quran:

- **Daily Quran Keeps the Heart Firm:** God says in the Quran, *"Say that the Holy Spirit has brought the Revelation with the Truth step by step from your Lord, to strengthen the believers and as guidance and good news to those who submit."*[16:102] The Quran is one of the greatest ways to attain firmness, as God says to the Prophet (s): *"So [Muhammad], We have told you the stories of the prophets to make your heart firm and in these accounts truth has come to you, as well as lessons and reminders for the believers."* [11:120]
- **Daily Quran wards away doubts:** On our long journey to God, we will certainly encounter some puzzling questions and obstacles to understanding (which are, in reality, due to our own biases and limitations). Our hearts may be confused by them, and we may consider compromising or even giving up on our goal reaching God. So part of the Quran's role in our journey is to prevent these doubts from blocking our path. The Quran reassures us, reminds us of our limits, and exposes the flaws of our baseless skepticism. A regular dosage of the Quran keeps our vision clear and our hearts firmly grounded, as Allah says, *"Whenever they bring you an argument, We come to you with the right refutation and the best explanation."* [25:33]
- **Daily Quran Reaffirms our Priorities:** It can be easy to forget our foundational principles when we encounter adversity. How many times have we held assumptions about our own capabilities that proved wrong when put to the test? This is where a daily routine of reciting the Quran must come to play its role, for it reminds us to stay firm. When was the last time you were put under pressure, whether from your family, coworkers, or just your personal desires, to go against what you knew to be right? How many people do you know who engage in business practices that are dubious—or even outright forbidden— but absolve themselves of guilt by claiming that otherwise, they and their family would be out on the streets? . Perhaps if they came across this ayah sooner, they would have chosen to dedicate their lives to a job that would benefit them both now and in the afterlife: *"Say, "If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish— (if all these) are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people."* (9:24)



## Read more

- **Daily Quran is shelter from the storm:** The more we familiarize ourselves with its discourse, the more prepared we are for tests that will inevitably come our way. Allah tells us in His Quran about the heroic response of the believers when they were attacked by an army made up of all of their enemies in a single alliance: *“When the believers saw the enemy alliance, they said, ‘This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us. The promise of Allah and His Messenger has come true.’ And this only increased them in faith and submission.”* [33:22] Because of their intimacy with the Quran, the Companions recognized God’s promise, and that the Quran had prepared them for such a day.

A daily recitation of the Quran endows the heart with certainty in Allah and His attributes. It increases our conviction in the fundamentals of our faith. These matters are repeated throughout the Quran in different styles with different approaches, drilling the meaning into our minds in order to establish them firmly. Allah says in the magnificent verse which refers to, according to different scholars of tafseer, to the falling of the rain in different patterns over the earth or to the showering of the Quran on the hearts: *“We certainly disperse it among them so they may be mindful...”* [25:50] To “disperse,” here, means to repeat in different styles.

*(Excerpt from Faith First p. 160-167)*



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## Episode 6

# Lean into a Verse

Sometimes when we read the Quran, our mind is wandering elsewhere. But then we stumble upon a verse that connects with something happening in our life. Or maybe it's a verse that excites us because we've spent time learning the meanings of its words and perfecting its pronunciation. When a verse strikes a chord in your heart like this, pause and lean into the verse. Dwell on it. Recite it again and again.

Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "If only people knew the value of reciting the Quran with deep reflection, they would busy themselves with it over everything else. When they come across the ayah they are in desperate need of, they would repeat it hundreds of times, for the duration of the entire night."

### Discuss

- Do you have an ayah or short surah that you love to recite or hear recited over and over? Why do you enjoy that repetition ... is it because of the melodious sound of the words or the meanings?
- How often do you discover a verse that you connect with? If it is not very often, what steps can you take to open your heart to more verses?
- What types of verses do you find yourself pausing at and repeating? (verses of hope, fear, descriptions of the heaven, verses that are also dua, or stories)
- What happens inside you, what do you feel, the more times you recite the ayah?
- In the story of Asmaa bint Abi Bakr in this episode, she did not tire of reciting the verse. Would you have gotten bored? Why or why not?

### Practice

- Choose a favorite ayah, find a quiet place, with little distraction, and repeat it over and over, slower and slower, and allow yourself to reflect and internalize.
- From now on, during every Quran recitation, find at least one verse to lean into and expand upon, spending a little extra time repeating it and allowing it to sink in.

## Read more

After acknowledging our brokenness and need for God’s help, we will find the Quran to have more of an impact when we recite it. The first time you come across an ayah, tasting the richness of it—not only understanding it on an intellectual level, but internalizing it - you will begin to realize what you have been missing out on for so long. It might just be one verse out of many that touches you this way. You will begin to understand its value, and why God reserved its delight for so few people. When this moment comes to you, don’t let it go. Lean into your interaction with the verse. Take hold of it with every ounce of strength, for these are the rare moments that have the potential to completely change our lives. The feeling you’ve just experienced is the light of that ayah penetrating your heart and alleviating the darkness—the physical manifestation of the metaphysical. Though iman usually grows through gradual processes, you’ve experienced an instantaneous lift that only God can provide.

Such inspiration is rare in the beginning, but don’t let that deter you from striving. After all, to experience these moments of deep spiritual insight is not our end goal; our goal is God’s pleasure and Paradise, and this is just one of the many ways in which He makes the journey enjoyable for us. Too many make the mistake of investing too much time and energy into seeking spiritual highs, compromising the ultimate objective. The beautiful sights on the road are there to keep us moving forward, not to stop us from reaching our destination. For as you keep on, the views grow more beautiful, and the journey’s end is more worthy.

...Abdullah bin Mas’ood would often spend the night repeating the ayah: “*My Lord! Increase me in knowledge*” [20:114] until the morning came. Umar bin al-Khattab, as well, would repeat Surah al-Fatihah until the morning without reciting anything else. This practice of repeating a single ayah over develops an ability of reflection that we would not otherwise have. Let the meanings sink deeply within, translating into movements of prostration and expressions of tears and earnest supplication.

*(Excerpt from Faith First, “Designing Your Daily Quran Session” p. 177)*



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## Episode 7

# Fake it 'til You Make it

What if we find, when we read the Quran, that we feel nothing? We don't react to the meanings, and our reading is superficial and hollow. Believe it or not, sometimes that's OK. Because even if it takes time, the wind and water weather away the rock and the earth shifts. Even a mountain would crumble in the face of the words of God.

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأُمُتُلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

*Had we sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have certainly seen it humbled and torn apart in awe of Allah. (59:21)*

Your heart is not stronger than the mountain. So do not be anxious if every recitation is not heartfelt, not every session with the Quran has to be epic. It's ok if you do not connect so deeply with the Quran today. Do the motions anyway: seek protection, ask for Help, take your time, feel the weight, read it daily. The Prophet (saw) said, "This Quran came down with sorrow. When you read it, cry, and if you cannot cry, then make yourself cry."



## Discuss

- Can you remember that one time that the quran made you cry? What verse was it? Did you cry because the meanings struck you, or was it the way you were feeling that day?
- Is there a time when you wanted to connect but couldn't? Did you think about why you couldn't? What was blocking the way?



## Practice

- Search on youtube: emotional quran recitation, quran and crying ... listen to the recitation, read the translation, watch the faces of the reciter and those listening to him ... what do you notice? How are the reciter and listeners interacting with the words and verses? What techniques is the reciter using to bring tears to his eyes and to those who are praying with him?
- Either during your Quran recitation or your night prayer, try to bring tears to your eyes, even if you are not one to cry easily. Often, performing a physical action, such as smiling or frowning or crying, can help summon the emotions associated with that action.

## Read more

Some people think that we must first purify our diseased hearts before coming to the Quran, and that a sick heart cannot really benefit from the Quran. They even misappropriate a maxim of Islamic self-development literature, “clean out before you decorate,” to support their view. But if this was true in our relationship the Quran, then really what good would the Quran be? Did God not describe it as a cure for the hearts? You cannot cure something that is not ill. God says, *“O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers.”* [10:57] The Quran is the most effective treatment for a sick heart. Its light sears through darkness, extinguishing it and removing the doubts and desires that come with it. God says, *“In fact, We hurl the truth against falsehood, leaving it crushed, and it quickly vanishes.”* [21:18]

Yes, we may not feel it at first. Our hearts might still be polluted with sins and lowly habits. We also may struggle with a language barrier, perceived lack of time, and deficiencies in mental focus. But this veil cannot stand long in the face of mindful effort, consistent recitation, and genuine reflection on the Quran. With every divine word that enters our heart, some filth is removed, and the heart comes one step closer to returning to its clear state. If we are persistent and diligent with the Quran for long enough, we will find our hearts functioning at full capacity.

God says in the Quran, *“He sends down rain from the sky, causing the valleys to flow, each according to its capacity. The currents then carry along rising foam, similar to the slag produced from metal that people melt in the fire for ornaments or tools. This is how Allah compares truth to falsehood. The (worthless) residue is then cast away, but what benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah sets forth parables.”* [13:17]

If we insist on purifying our hearts as a prerequisite to coming to the Quran, we will stagnate in our spiritual journey. The problem will not be fixed, and new issues will keep cropping up. There will never come a day when we can truly claim to be completely purified, and so those who take this approach will prevent themselves from the light of the Quran, deprived of its healing cure.

*(Excerpt from Faith First pg. 155)*



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## Episode 8

# The Language Barrier

Learning Arabic is an excellent tool in understanding the Quran, but we can't afford to neglect our connection with the Quran while we develop that tool. Give yourself permission to read and reflect upon the Quran in a language that you understand. The Quran's miraculous effects are universal and never-ending, transcending language, culture, and context. It's a message sent to the whole world, not only to those who have the access and opportunity to master the Arabic language:

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

*"But it is simply a reminder to the whole world." 68:52*

Put in the work to deepen your understanding of one verse. Read less rather than more, use translations and tafseer, pencil in meanings of words, use [quranreflect.com](http://quranreflect.com) to discover new perspectives, find one or two words that you do understand and hold onto them like anchors. Then lean into that verse whenever you recite it or hear it.

### Discuss

- If you could create a toolkit for those who are trying to understand the Quran despite not understanding Arabic, what would you recommend? (An excellent translation is a start)
- What has helped you connect more deeply with the Quran despite language obstacles? Can you share those tips with others who are struggling? Post your tips on [mas.quranreflect.com/isr](http://mas.quranreflect.com/isr)
- Our community has come a long way in developing tools and aids to understanding the Quran for English-speaking Muslims. Institutions and schools are paving the way in the area of understanding the Quran without an Arabic background. Explore some of these tools and see what resonates with you. The series *How to Ponder the Quran even if you don't understand Arabic* is an excellent starting point!
- It is still vital that Muslims increase their knowledge of Arabic in order to access even more of the Quran's benefits and treasures. What are the beginning steps one can take in their journey to learn Arabic?

### Practice

- Pick one short surah to study in-depth this Ramadan. Listen to a lecture series or read the tafseer, pencil the meanings in your mushaf, memorize the translation. Use this surah in your night prayer.



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## Episode 9

# Be a Conduit

The Quran is Allah's guidance to the world, but a copy will not fly into every hand. And even if it did, there's no guarantee that it will be read with understanding. There is a key component to delivering this critical message: it's you. You are connected to others, and you can share the message in a way that resonates with their language, their culture, their situation. You are the conduit for the Quran. Don't allow fear and hesitation to prevent you from sharing this message with a world that is desperately in need of it.

كُتِبَ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنذِرَ بِهِ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

*“This Book has been sent down to you [Prophet]—let there be no anxiety in your heart because of it—so that you may use it to give warning and to remind the believers.” (7:2)*

## Discuss

- The mother of the believers, Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, described the Prophet as a walking Qur'an. What does that mean? What are some examples of this that you can think of? How can you begin in your journey to be as the Prophet was?
- Reflect on what will happen to us, and the world, if we do not convey the message of the Quran.
- When asked to share about your faith, to introduce it to others, is there a verse in the Qur'an you always use to help you with that task?
- Is there a verse in the quran that you say to yourself:
  - when you are anxious, to calm you down?
  - when you are scared, to give you courage?
  - when you are frustrated, to give you patience?
  - when you are sad, to give you comfort?

Make note of these verses and make sure to share with others when they are feeling the same.

## Practice

- Share something about the Quran today.
  - Send a message to a friend and say, “I thought you would like this verse.”
  - Post a status or message on your social media profile about a specific verse or surah.
  - Make sure to tell non-Muslim friends and colleagues not just about fasting in Ramadan, but also about how much time we are spending reconnecting with the Quran. See if you can share something specific about a verse that has inspired you.



Read more



Sayyid Qutb wrote, “There is really only one way to return to Allah, as living in the shade of the Quran has made clear to me: it is to dedicate your whole life to Allah. He gave you a map and instructions on how to do so in His scripture. This means to let the Quran dictate our every move. The human being, who was created by God, will never unlock the door to their inner dimensions with anything other than a key from God Himself. Nothing can cure the illnesses in the bodies and souls save the medicine from God Himself. And He has certainly given us the key to all doors and the cure for all maladies:

*We send down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers [17:82]*

“Despite all of this, the human race is not concerned about its own wellbeing and humanity. Many are not interested in securing their own happiness and protecting themselves from punishment. They know that the best repair for a broken device would be done by the device’s inventor, but they don’t want to apply this rule when it comes to their own selves. They are not interested in returning to the One who created them in order to find the best way to repair their hearts and souls. They are dealing with incredibly nuanced and delicate devices, their own hearts and souls, whose inner workings no one can know but their inventor.

*How could He not know His Own creation? For He (alone) is the Most Subtle, All-Aware. [67:14]*

“This is where the misery of the confused and lost human being stems from. People will never find righteousness, guidance, comfort, or happiness until they submit their human nature to its grand Creator, just as any broken device would be brought back to its maker.”

*(Excerpt from Faith First p. 216)*



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# Episode 10

## Come with a Question

A powerful technique in approaching the Quran is to ask it a question. Seek out a spiritual theme in your recitation and listen closely to how it responds.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَسَاءِّلِينَ

*There are lessons in the story of Joseph and his brothers for the askers. (12:7)*

This method of reading engages a higher level of thinking in our reading of the Quran. Make connections between the verses you read today and your current life struggles. Ask the Quran a specific question: How can I know God better? Why is God testing me? How can I be happy? How do I stop sinning? What is missing in my faith? How can I serve God better today?

The questions you bring to the Quran will open your mind to new levels of reflection. Pick up on phrases and meanings recurring through different verses and surahs. Look for diagnosis, treatment, inspiration and direction.

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*“And now We have sent down to you a Scripture in which is your mention. Will you not use your reason?”*

### Discuss

- What new mental and emotional skills do we engage when we ask a question during our reading of the Quran?
- Pay attention to how often the Quran calls us to think and use reason. Why is it important that we engage new parts of our mind in reading the Quran? Is it enough to just react emotionally?
- Take the example of the story of Yusuf in the Quran (the surah containing the first verse cited in the episode). How is it different when one listens to the verses as a story, and when one approaches the verses as a seeker, looking for answers in their own life?

### Practice

- Dr. Magdy Al-Hilali in his book Faith First suggests reading the Quran with a theme in mind. Make a wishlist of questions and themes you would like to approach the Quran with and keep in mind during your reading.
- Read Surah Yusuf as a seeker, not as a passive listener. Ask questions of the Quran amidst the story of Prophet Yusuf, and search for answers to your pressing questions.



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## Read more



A powerful technique of approaching the Quran is to seek a spiritual theme during your recitation. Notice how God says, *“There are lessons in the story of Joseph and his brothers for all who seek them.”* [12:7] “Those who seek,” as defined by Shaykh Abdul-Rahman al-Sa’di, are those who seek to benefit from the verses and stories in the Quran. Benefitting to this degree requires a certain level of focus and attention. We can apply this seeking approach to our reading of the Quran, searching for the spiritual implications of the verses we recite as well as seeking to strengthen a specific aspect of our iman.

Challenge yourself with a specific spiritual lens while reading the Quran. Embark on your recitation with a theme in mind, searching for answers that will increase a particular aspect of your iman. In this chapter, we will suggest examples of this theme-based reading of the Quran. Focusing on a theme during recitation will open up your mind to reflection, while also drawing your attention to the multiple themes and angles from which any ayah can be approached. This focus does not take away from all of the other aspects that the verses address; rather, the opposite is true as we make new connections between ideas and spiritual meanings. This method of reading engages a higher level of analysis in our recitation. We learn reflective thinking. It makes the sweetness of faith more potent. Relating the verses you read to your life struggles and experiences will evoke nearness, familiarity, and comforting companionship with God.

Test out one of the lenses suggested in the upcoming pages and complete a reading of the entire Quran with it. Pick up on phrases, tones, and meanings that are recurring through different passages, and which might be relevant to your current experiences.

[The author of Faith First proposes a list of suggested themes to keep in mind while reading the Quran and goes into depth with each one. (pgs. 180-211) You can journey with one of these themes as your lens, or adjust the lens to fit the needs of your heart at the moment.]

(Excerpt from Faith First pg. 179)



# Episode 11

## Ask for Help

The devil knows of the Quran's power to heal and guide, and so he uses his best tricks. He tells you it's no use: that reading the Quran is boring, that you'll never recite it correctly, that you should learn Arabic first, that it's better to wait until later. Instead, seek refuge from the Shaitan!

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

*"When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.*

*He certainly has no authority over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord." (16:98)*

Then, call out for help! Do you really think that you can unlock the secrets of His glorious scripture on your own, without His help? Didn't He bring you to life from a bit of flesh, and give you hearing, seeing and the ability to feel and understand? Prophet Muhammad (s) used to recite this heartfelt prayer: "Make the Quran the spring of my heart, the light of my sight, the reliever of my grief, and the remover of my worries."

## Discuss

- What does "seek refuge" mean to you? What do you "seek refuge" from when you attempt to connect with the quran?
- Try to recognize the mind tricks that the devil plays on you to distract and discourage you from the Quran. How much power do those tricks have over you? Do you see why it's important to ask Allah for protection?
- Think about the supplication of the Prophet (s) mentioned in this episode. What insight can you gain from that supplication?

## Practice

- Memorize the supplication mentioned in this episode (it is part of a longer supplication of the Prophet (s) called *sayyid al-Istighfar* which means: Master Supplication for Forgiveness - included below). Use it in your duas and try ending your daily recitation of the Quran with: "Make the Quran the spring of my heart, the light of my sight, the reliever of my grief, and the remover of my worries."

## Read more



Remind yourself of how much you want this, and tell Allah. Ask Him to open the doors of understanding for you. Ask Him to allow His light to illuminate our dark hearts—the darkness is, after all, a result of our distance from Him and His majestic book. Remember that He is the One who, when you were just a lump of flesh engulfed in darkness, nourished you and formed you into a perfect human being—and you had nothing to do with it. Then He brought you into the world, safe and sound, and gave you your faculties and capacities to interact with everything around you—and you had nothing to do with it. God taught you to walk and talk, and planned every step you took to be for your own ultimate benefit—and you had nothing to do with it. Do you really think, now, that you can unlock the secrets of His glorious scripture on your own? Given our endless debt to Him, let us begin our call for help with a plea for forgiveness.

*“If only you sought Allah’s forgiveness so you may be shown mercy!” [27:46]*

The Quran is the source of the heart’s life and sustenance. Its effect is universal, but its most precious jewels are rare and not exposed to everyone. It is only Allah who can assist us in our search for them. Our dire need for His help is clear. Even the Prophet ﷺ himself constantly sought help from Allah in internalizing and understanding the meanings of the Quran. He ﷺ said, *“When anyone is stricken with worry or grief, they should say, “O Allah, I am your servant, the child of your male and female servant. My fate is in your hands, your decree for me is inevitable, and your judgment of me is fair. I ask you by every name that you have, with which you named yourself, or which you revealed in your scripture, or which you taught to anyone of you creation, or which you have kept privy to yourself in your exclusive knowledge of the unseen: please make the Quran the spring of my heart, the light of my sight, the reliever of my grief, and the remover of my worries.” The Prophet ﷺ continued saying, “[Whoever said this] Allah will relieve their worry and replace their grief with happiness.” The Companions asked, “Messenger of Allah, should we learn these words?” He ﷺ said, “Yes, whoever hears them should learn them.”(Ahmed)*

*(Excerpt from Faith First p. 170)*