

RECLAIMING QUR'ANIC JOY:

*A Heart Centred Approach to Engaging
Holistically with the Qur'an*



Dr. R. Ebied
Ihsan Education
www.ihsanedu.com

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Ameen.

Introduction

RECLAIMING QUR'ANIC JOY:

A Heart Centred Approach to Engaging Holistically with the Qur'an

**In the Name of Allah, The Most Compassionate,
The Most Merciful.**

We search for joy in many places – through people, experiences, and achievements. Yet there's been a source of internal and eternal spiritual joy among us all along. We have been accustomed to seeking joy externally, which turns into moments of fleeting happiness, yet there's a sacred true joy that is always available for our hearts.

What if you knew you were loved – deeply loved – held, and supported ?

What if you felt grounded in truth, connected to your purpose, and fulfilled in your journey?

What if you could find a consistent source for healing, peace, and reassurance amidst life's storms ?

What if it's been there all along, ready to embrace you when you approach it with a humbled heart?

This is the Quran, The Final Divine Revelation from God, sent to all of humanity, delivered to us by the last messenger, the beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) described the kind of relationship, healing and inner renewal the Quran can provide for our holistic wellbeing in a beautiful duaa:

“....I ask you with every name that You have named Yourself with or revealed in Your Book (Quran), or taught to any of Your creation or kept with Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You that You make the Quran the life of my heart, and the light of my chest and the banisher of my sadness and the reliever of my distress”. (Ahmad)

Rooted in God's Love, Prophetic guidance, and meaningful, heart-centered learning focused on Tazkiyah (heart purification) and Tadabbur (holistic engagement with the Quran), this guide seeks to empower you to cultivate a close and enduring relationship with the Qur'an. This guide was designed as an invitation to return to the Qur'an not only as a text to be studied, but as a **living source of Divine Love, mercy, healing and joy**. At its heart is the belief that the Qur'an speaks to the human heart, especially in times of uncertainty, vulnerability, and growth, and that its guidance becomes most transformative when it is approached with sincerity, humility, and presence.

This humble work would not have been possible first and foremost without the complete Grace and Mercy of Allah (SwT) and the responsibility that our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) carried to deliver the Quran to humanity, followed by the generosity of my teachers, sisters, and scholars who have taught me so much by the grace of God. Please note I do not consider myself a scholar of Quranic studies, but a humble student longing to experience the mercy and joy of engaging holistically with the Quran. As a servant of God, and an educator by profession, I strove to merge my studies and experiences to provide a guidebook that can be helpful for students, educators, parents, community leaders, or anyone seeking to begin or strengthen their relationship with The final Divine Message to humanity – the Quran.

Ultimately, as a human with a heart seeking Divine Love, mercy, and reassurance, I hoped to share with my fellow humans how they also can seek and strengthen their connection to Divine Guidance through the Quran.

Thus, this guide aims to provide some tools and spiritual foundations for students, educators, parents and anyone seeking to engage holistically and joyfully with the Quran through seeking the healing, guidance, mercy, and inner well-being promised in the Qur'an (10:57-58): **"O humanity! Indeed, there has come to you counsel from your Lord, healing for what is in the hearts, a guide, and a mercy for the believers. Say, 'O Prophet, 'In Allah's grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever 'wealth' they amass"**.

I ask God to grant His blessings upon this work and to forgive me for my shortcomings. May Allah revive His love, the love of His book, and the love of His Prophet peace be upon him in our hearts, in our homes, and in our communities.



OUR VISION:

Ihsan Education (™) inspires ihsan – moral beauty and excellence—to cultivate spiritual Leadership, compassion, and resilience among women, families, organizations, and communities in support of holistic well-being and meaningful service to society (™).

OUR PHILOSOPHY:

At Ihsan Education™, we embrace ihsan by cultivating values such as compassion, equity and service leadership. Our approach equips individuals and communities with tools to deepen their faith, strengthen relationships, and contribute to peace and positive change in the world.

OUR SERVICES:

We provide a range of educational and community-building initiatives, including:

- **Classes, Training, Coaching & Consulting** on faith, engaging holistically with the Quran, personal growth, and community development for students, educators, parents, and leaders to enhance excellence in education, compassionate and spiritual leadership and communities, holistic well-being, resilient families, equity and inclusion and belonging rooted in faith.
- **Free Resources** such as articles, videos, spiritual reflections, and webinars to inspire ongoing learning and service.

Together, these services support individuals and communities in living with purpose, resilience, and ihsan, moral beauty and excellence.

For more information and to sign up for our newsletter to receive access to classes, audios, and videos for this guide, please visit www.ihsanedu.com.

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: LOVE

Islam reminds us that there is a Source of love that is complete and everlasting - Divine Love. Allah is *Al-Wadood*: The Loving, The Affectionate, which means love translated and manifested into action. *Arrahman* denotes Merciful Love: Allah's Love is The Source of comfort, peace, protection, healing and strength for the subtlest and most difficult moments.



The basis of the relationship with God is love, balanced with fear/reverence and hope:

“He loves them and they love Him” (Qur'an 5:54)

“Say: If you love God follow me and God will love you” (Quran 3:31) (which was, according to the exegetical tradition, addressed to Prophet Muhammad)

“..For I bestowed upon you love from me so that you would be brought up under my ‘watchful’ eye” (Quran 20:39)

“Still there are some who take others as Allah's equal—they love them as they should love Allah—but the ‘true’ believers love Allah even more....” (Quran 2:165)

In a Prophetic narration, we are given the example of the greatest type of human love, the love of a mother towards her child and that God's love for us supersedes even that type of unconditional love.

In a Hadith Qudsi: “Allah says: If My servant comes near to Me by a handspan, I come near to him by an arm's length. If he comes near to Me by an arm's length, I come near to him by a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running”.

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IHSAN: A THIRD OF OUR FAITH

We can approach the Quran through the lens of Ihsan and Afiya.

Ihsan is defined through a longer Hadith (authentic narration of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), outlining the three dimensions of the faith as Islam, Iman (Faith), and Ihsan. The portion of the authentic narration that specifically defines Ihsan is as follows:



To worship (adore) Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion, then (know that) He sees you.

“....Allah loves the Muhsineen” (Quran 2:195)

Ihsan is considered a core part of faith, yet it is often overlooked in faith education. It is commonly translated as excellence, but it goes beyond doing things well—it is about living with **sincerity, moral integrity, and awareness of God** in all that we do.

At its heart, ihsan is about cultivating **Divine love, presence, and beauty** in our thoughts, actions, and character. It brings together the heart, mind, and behavior, reminding us that faith is not only practiced in rituals, but lived through daily choices and interactions.

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AFIYA: THE WHOLENESS WE SEEK

A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: 'O Messenger of Allāh, which supplication is the best?' He (ﷺ) said: 'Ask Your Lord for pardon and well-being in this world and the Hereafter'. Then he came to him the next day and said: 'O Prophet of Allāh, which supplication is the best?' He (ﷺ) said: 'Ask Your Lord for pardon (afwa) and well-being (afiyah) in this world and the Hereafter, for if you are granted well-being in this life and in the Hereafter, then you have indeed succeeded.' (i.e to say:)

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْعَفْوَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ [Reported by Al-Bukhārī in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad (no. 637) and At-Tirmidhī (no. 3512).

By putting the Quranic and prophetic values of spiritual and moral beauty and integrity (ihsan) into practice, we can cultivate resilient and compassionate communities and schools that put their members' holistic well-being (afiya) first.



PROCESSES TO REACH IHSAN

Reviving ihsan in faith can cultivate a process that goes beyond cognitive learning and fosters inner transformation to nurture the heart, elevate our character and deepen our love for God. This journey unfolds through three interrelated principles: Tarbiyah, Tazkiyah, and Tadabbur.

Tarbiya (Holistic Development and Upbringing): Tarbiyah is a “holistic, embodied, and reflective process that facilitates human flourishing and the transformation of the human condition in its diverse psychical, cognitive, spiritual, moral, and emotional articulations.” It is “not limited to a form of religious education, instruction, or nurture” (Sahin, 2018).

Recommended Article: Dr. Zainab Alwani: Transformational Teaching: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Teacher and Murabbi

<https://www.zainabalwani.com/taddabur-alquran/transformational-teaching-prophet-muhammad-as-a-teacher-and-murabbi>

Tazkiya (Spiritual Purification and inner renewal): Tazkiyah refers to the ongoing process of purifying the heart by cultivating self-awareness, sincerity, humility, and enhancing moral character, while gently addressing inner barriers such as distraction, arrogance and other ‘diseases’ of the heart. Through practices like reflection, remembrance, repentance, and intentional living, tazkiyah nurtures a sound heart that is receptive to truth, Divine Guidance, mercy, and love. It is a compassionate and lifelong journey of inner renewal that allows faith to continue to flourish in the heart.

Tadabbur (Reflective and Holistic Engagement with the Qur’an): Tadabbur is the practice of engaging with the Qur’an thoughtfully, reflectively, and holistically—using the heart, mind, body, and soul. It invites being present, contemplating meaning, and allowing the Qur’an to speak to our experiences and realities with relevance and care. Tadabbur transforms the Qur’an from a text that is merely recited into a deeper relationship with the source of Divine guidance, healing, and mercy.

PART 1: PREPARING AND PURIFYING THE HEART TO ENGAGE HOLISTICALLY AND JOYFULLY WITH THE QUR'AN - TAZKIYA

INTRODUCTION

Just like we cleanse and rejuvenate our bodies and minds through sleep, nutrition, exercise and hygiene, our hearts and souls need cleansing and rejuvenation too. In order to reach a state of inner renewal and closeness with God which enables us to engage holistically and joyfully with the Quran, the Quran and prophetic narrations frequently stress the significance of cleansing and purifying the heart, which is the key to holistic well-being. In an authentic narration, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shares:

“There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoiled the whole body gets spoiled and that is the heart” (Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 52).

The Prophet would also reflect the importance of tazkiya in his dua in this excerpt from a longer dua :

...اللهم آت نفسي تقواها، وزكها أنت خير من زكاها، أنت وليها ومولاها، اللهم إني أعوذ بك من علم لا ينفع ومن قلب لا يخشع، ومن نفس لا تشبع، ومن دعوة لا يستجاب لها.” ((رواه مسلم)).

O Allah! Grant me the sense of piety and purify my soul as You are the Best to purify it. You are its Guardian and its Protecting Friend. O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the knowledge which is not beneficial, and from a heart which does revere you, and from desire which is not satisfied, and from a prayer that is not answered
[Muslim]

One of the main purposes of the Prophet's Mission (peace be upon him): **“Since We have sent you a messenger from among yourselves—reciting to you Our revelations, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you never knew”** (Quran 2:51).

Dr. Zainab Alwani describes *tazkiya* as “a continuous process of purification that maintains one’s spiritual health, removes what is harmful for its growth, and moves it toward the height of purification”.

“The ultimate objective of self-purification (and therefore this text) is to seek the divine pleasure (ridwan) of Allah, by undergoing a spiritual struggle to adorn the heart with the lofty attributes of perseverance, gratitude, fear of Allah, hope, abstention, unity, trust, love, truthfulness, remorse, reflection, reckoning, contemplation and so on.” (Ibn Daud, A Handbook of Spiritual Medicine, p.25).



STATES OF THE HEART IN THE QURAN

There are over 40 states of the heart mentioned in the Quran, compiled in the Arabic book, “The Art of Tadabbur” for Dr. Issam Al-Uwaid. A few of them are mentioned below.

Some Healthy States of the Heart:

- قَلْبٌ سَلِيمٌ **“Qalb Saleem” – A Sound, Whole and Pure Heart:** “the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit. Only those who come before Allah with a pure heart ‘will be saved’.” (Qur’an 26:88–89)
- قَلْبٌ مُّئِيبٌ **“Qalb Muneeb” – A returning, repentant heart:** “who were in awe of the Most Compassionate without seeing Him, and have come with a heart turning only to Him.” (Quran 50:33)
- قَلْبٌ مُّطْمَئِنٌّ **“Qalb Mutma’in” – A heart at peace and tranquility:** “those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort.” (Quran 13:28)
- قَلْبٌ خَاشِعٌ **“Qalb Khashi” – A humble, softened heart** “Has the time not come for those who believe that their hearts should humble themselves to the remembrance of Allah?” (Qur’an 57:16)

Some Unhealthy States of the Heart:

- قَسْوَةُ الْقَلْبِ **“Qaswat al-Qalb” – Hard Heart:** “Even then your hearts became hardened like a rock or even harder, for some rocks gush rivers; others split, spilling water; while others are humbled in awe of Allah. And Allah is never unaware of what you do” (Quran 2:74).
- قَلْبٌ مَّرِيضٌ **“Qalb Marid” – Diseased Heart:** “There is sickness in their hearts, and Allah ‘only’ lets their sickness increase...” (Quran 2:10)
- قَلْبٌ مَخْتُومٌ **“Qalb Makhtum” – A sealed heart:** “Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and their sight is covered...” (Quran 2:7)
- قَلْبٌ غَافِلٌ **“Qalb Ghāfil” – A heedless, inattentive heart:** “Do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance.” (Qur’an 18:28)
- عَمَى الْقُلُوبِ **– Blind Heart:** “Have they not journeyed in the land that their hearts might understand and their ears might listen? For indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the chests that grow blind.” (Quran 22:46)

Recommended Series: My Dear Heart Series for Shaikha Haifaa Younis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5m1NsaVopU&list=PLIABUur57RI7kHwXKVkxGpU3bWOU-orSm&index=4>

THE IMPORTANCE OF PURIFYING AND NURTURING THE SOUL OR SELF

In **Surat al-Shams**, Allah takes the longest sequence of oaths in the Qur'an—explaining the greatness of His creation, and leading up to an oath on true success for the one who **purifies and nurtures their soul or self**: “By the sun and its brightness, (1) and the moon as it follows it, (2) and the day as it unveils it, (3) and the night as it conceals it! (4) And by heaven and ‘the One’ Who built it, (5) and the earth and ‘the One’ Who spread it! (6) And by the soul and ‘the One’ Who fashioned it, (7) then with ‘the knowledge of’ right and wrong inspired it! (8) **Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul,** (9).

The Quran describes three types of ‘nafs’ (self) that the human being typically observes:

1. An-Nafs al-Ammarah (The Commanding Self / Inciting Soul):

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي

“Indeed, the soul is prone to evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy.”

[Quran 12:53]

In this state, one may be inclined towards unhealthy behaviours due to desires and whims overriding God conscious and healthy decisions and actions.

2. An-Nafs al-Lawwamah (The Self-Reproaching / Blaming Soul)

وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ

“And I swear by the self-reproaching soul.”

[Quran 75:2]

In this state, when one engages in unhealthy decisions and actions, they experience a sense of self-reproach or remorse as a result of their moral reflection and self accountability which leads to a desire to do better.

3. An-Nafs al-Mutma'innah (The Tranquil / Satisfied Soul)

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

“O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him].” — [Quran [28–89:27]

This is the ideal state we all hope to arrive at – a peaceful, contented soul that is aligned with the Divine Guidance of Our Creator.

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PURIFICATION BEFORE BEAUTIFICATION

There is a beautiful concept in classical Islamic spirituality and tazkiyah (purification of the soul) “تخلية قبل التحلية” (*Takhliya qabl al-Tahliya*), loosely translated into: **“Emptying before adorning”** or **“Purification before beautification.”**

This concept teaches us that before one can fill the heart with the Light, Love, and remembrance of God (*tahliya*), one must first cleanse it from the impurities and diseases of the hearts (*takhliya*).

Takhliya (تخلية) – to empty, cleanse, and detach

- Removing unhealthy qualities: pride, envy, hatred, arrogance, hypocrisy, greed, heedlessness, and over-attachment to worldly matters.
- Letting go of inner “noise” and distractions that block Divine guidance.

Tahliya (تحلية) – to adorn, beautify, and illuminate

- Filling the heart with noble traits: sincerity, humility, gratitude, compassion, patience, and love of Allah.
- Cultivating remembrance (*dhikr*), mindfulness (*tafakkur*), and moral beauty (*ihsan*).

The purification (*takhliya*) precedes growth and adornment (*tahliya*). The heart must be cleansed from inner toxins before it can receive Divine guidance and light.



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”كلما طهر القلب رَقَّ، فإذا رَقَّ راق، وإذا راق ذاق، وإذا ذاق فاق، وإذا فاق اشتاق، وإذا اشتاق اجتهد، وإذا اجتهد هبت عليه نسائم الجنة فيفرح بالطاعة، ومن ذاق عرف، ومن عرف اغترف، ومن اغترف نال الشر”
ابن القيم

“The more the heart is purified, the more it becomes refined.
When it is refined, it becomes luminous.
When it becomes luminous, it tastes.
When it tastes, it rises above.
When it rises above, it yearns.
When it yearns, it strives.
When it strives, the breezes of Paradise blow upon it, and it rejoices in obedience.
Whoever tastes, knows;
whoever knows, draws deeply;
and whoever draws deeply attains honor.”

— Ibn al-Qayyim

3 GOALS OF TAZKIYAH

Dr Adnan Rajeh, in his online series on Tazkiyah, begins with laying a foundation that our self-worth is sacred and granted by God in the Quran: “We have dignified the children of Adam” (Quran 17:70). There should be no self-loathing in tazkiyah work – it is a gentle gradual, compassionate process of positive change.

3 Goals of Tazkiya (Only Achieved through following Quran and Sunnah):

- **Clarity** of mind, emotions and intentions
- **Closeness** to Allah to enjoy His presence and your worship and reading the Quran
- **Control** over behaviours of actions and consistency of ethics and values
 - Support us to navigate our emotional experiences
 - The more you protect the heart, the more sensitive it becomes and the more careful we need to be with our environment.



FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR TAZKIYA

-Dr. Adnan Rajeh Online Series on Tazkiya

Consider your nafs as a child: treat it with care, patience, and guidance.

1. Graduality and Tenderness

- The nafs is adaptable but fragile; sudden extreme changes can overwhelm it.
- Change should be **incremental**, gentle, and sustainable.
- Example: Strong, immediate repentance (180° change) may rebound if not gradual.

2. Honesty and Self-Transparency

- Be clear about your values, choices, habits, and areas for improvement.
- Requires courage, humility, and admission of faults.
- Bravery to confront oneself is essential for genuine purification.

3. Consistency of Habits

- Daily practice is crucial; consistency beats intensity.
- If a habit is missed, make it up the next day. If it's missed several days in a row, reset and start from the beginning.
- Small, steady effort leads to lasting transformation.

4. Complete Separation and Substitution

- When leaving a harmful behavior, fully detach from it and its triggers.
- Bring a positive replacement habit or mindset.
- In cases of strong addictions, external support or rehabilitation may be necessary.

In summary, these principles remind us that Tazkiyah is **gentle yet persistent**, combining **self-awareness, honesty, steady effort, and mindful substitution**. It mirrors the way one would guide a child: with care, patience, and loving discipline.

METHODS FOR TAZKIYA PROCESS

Dr. Adnan Rajeh explains 4 methods of tazkiyah, which we can also refer to as strategies to support us on this journey of preparing the heart to engage with the Quran:

1. External (Environment & Companions)

- Surround yourself with people, spaces, and experiences that encourage healthy spiritually aligned choices and discourage that which is not aligned with God's guidance.
- The company you keep shapes your character and spiritual state.

2. Internal (Knowledge & Reflection in Action)

- Engage your mind with knowledge, reflection, and deliberate practice to encourage positive and uplifting thought processes and change.
- Actively do things that challenge your nafs, and encourage positive growth, building discipline, and cultivate selflessness.
- Knowledge informs action, helping you align habits with spiritual goals.

3. Lifestyle (Body & Routine)

- Care for the body as part of spiritual discipline.
- Examples: balanced sleep, proper nutrition, structured routine, and exercise.
- Physical health supports mental clarity and spiritual resilience.

4. Reinforcements (Spiritual Practices & Reminders)

- Use dhikr, du'a, Qur'an recitation, and gratitude (ḥamd) to reinforce spiritual growth daily and do everything with ihsan and contemplate our worship to Allah and this solidifies your self value that doesn't fluctuate and generate humbleness to remove diseases of the heart.
- Dhikr and Qur'an are antidotes for spiritual diseases: e.g., *ḥamd* (thanking and praising Allah) counteracts vanity; *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness) counters arrogance.
- Stories of the pious (ṣāliḥīn) and Prophetic guidance strengthen habit formation and moral awareness.

Reflecting on our values leads to tawba and repentance and to start practicing more compassion which strengthens humility and thus, we accept our mortality and focus on our accountability.

This activates tools of taqwa (God consciousness) , tawakul (trust in Allah) ,hayaa (ethical sensitivity), and zuhd (asceticism) and the right mindset to navigate challenges in life.

The Heart then starts to generate the most precious commodity that exists - genuine love and at that time, you have found everything that brings you true joy and fulfillment.

It's a path - there's an infinite amount of closeness that you can achieve - you can always become closer to Allah. We don't expect perfection - but awareness of our shortcomings and our level of progress and that we should be sincere, and keep the heart protected. If we fall, keep trying.

Therefore, the tazkiyah process is a **holistic** one which considers **external influences, internal reflection, physical and psychological well-being, and spiritual reinforcement**. Together, these methods help the heart and soul prepare for tadabbur - to engage holistically with the Quran and develop toward Ihsan—moral beauty, clarity, and closeness to Allah.



HEEDLESSNESS (GHAFLAH): ONE OF THE GREATEST BARRIERS

One of the most significant inner barriers to meaningful engagement with the Quran is heedlessness (*ghaflah*). Classical scholars describe *ghaflah* as a state of distraction or inattentiveness, not necessarily disbelief, but a turning away of the heart from what truly matters.

Heedlessness often develops subtly as it can be a result of constant busyness, emotional or psychological overwhelm, unexamined habits, societal pressures, or overuse of technology and entertainment. It can be likened to being in 'autopilot' mode without presence and a longing for Allah's closeness. Over time, it dulls mindfulness and moral clarity, and makes it difficult for the heart to be impacted by spiritual reminders or guidance. Heedlessness may be considered a root condition from which many other spiritual and moral struggles develop.

From a Qur'anic perspective, *ghaflah* is not merely about forgetting information, but about losing sight of one's purpose and accountability to God. The Qur'an repeatedly warns against hearts that become inattentive to Divine signs, human responsibility, and the reality of return to Allah:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ۚ ۲۸

“And patiently stick with those who call upon their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure. Do not let your eyes look beyond them, desiring the luxuries of this worldly life. And do not obey those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follow ‘only’ their desires and whose state is ‘total’ loss”. (Quran 18:28)

At the same time, the Qur'an and Prophetic teachings emphasize that heedlessness is treatable, and that remembrance, reflection, and intentional living can gently awaken the heart:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ٢٤

“O believers! Respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah stands between a person and their heart, and that to Him you will all be gathered”. (Quran 8:24)

Heedlessness may appear in familiar forms:

- Heedless of accountability
- Keeping unhealthy company and not defending the truth
- Addicted to technology and social media
- Difficulty sustaining attention or reflection
- Emotional numbness or disengagement
- Reduced sensitivity to right and wrong
- Faith becoming routine, performative, or disconnected from daily life

It is important to approach this topic with compassion rather than judgment, particularly with young people. The goal of faith education is not to harshly shame others, but to gently and wisely create conditions for faith to flourish in the heart with God's love and mercy.

Classical Islamic teachings offer a holistic response to *ghaflah* that includes:

- Fulfilling Allah's Rights
- Reflecting on the Value of Time
- The Value of Keeping Good Company
- The Reality of Death
- Counseling children at a young age
- Accounting for one's deeds and seeking Allah's forgiveness
- Honouring Righteous People
- Nurturing remembrance (*dhikr*)
- Cultivating reflective engagement with the Qur'an (*tadabbur*)
- Strengthening healthy habits and environments
- Reconnecting with purpose, gratitude, and hope

(Adapted from Ibn Daud, Handbook of Spiritual Medicine)

We can strive to approach the Qur'an as a source of healing, guidance, and mercy, not pressure or only fear. When hearts begin to awaken, even gently, the Qur'an is no longer experienced as distant or demanding—but as a companion that speaks meaningfully into our lives.



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PERSONAL REFLECTION



Is my heart ready?

Is my heart ready to receive the rains of revelation?

Is my heart ready to access eternal and internal joy?

Is my heart ready to embrace the mercy, healing, guidance and joy of God's words for my heart?

Is my heart ready?

Or is it distracted, weighed down heavily by the trials of this world, and consumed with worries beyond our human capacity to manage?

Is my heart ready to be surrounded and encompassed by God's love for me?

Is my heart ready to continue to tread on a journey of arriving with a heart that is sound, at peace, and whole, a qalb saleem to meet its Lord?

Is my heart ready to be filled with God's light, so that when I walk to Him on that day, my light shines ahead of me to arrive at the Source of Light, Al-Noor, with peace, and dwell in Darassalam, The Abode of Peace, Eternally, in sha Allah?

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JOURNALING QUESTIONS:

1 What is the current state of my heart? (Open, distracted, yearning, burdened, other)?
[Question Adapted from Dr. Zainab Alwani]

2 How can I soften my heart and return to presence before My Most Loving Creator and Cherisher?

3 What thoughts, desires, or emotions need cleansing so my reflection flows from sincerity and love rather than ego?

Strategies for Educators:

- Integrate *muhasabah* (self-reflection) journals — students write about how they can embody a Qur’anic value during the week.
- Use stories of the Prophets and companions to highlight the *tazkiyah* process — growth through patience, humility, and trust.
- Invite students to create “Compassion Challenges” or “Ihsan Projects” inspired by specific Qur’anic themes (e.g., kindness to parents, justice, gratitude).
- Model emotional literacy — discuss how verses address human feelings (fear, sadness, hope) and how Allah guides us through them.

Reflection for Educators

- In what ways does modern life make *ghaflah* more likely for our students—and for ourselves?
- How can our classrooms and homes become spaces that reduce distraction and invite presence?
- What practices help awaken hearts gently rather than forcefully?

Recommended Resources:

“Qalb”: A Handbook of Spiritual Medicine, Ibn Daud

“A Continual Cycle of Self-Purification”, Also includes all of the Diseases of the Heart and Ways to Remedy them (Ex/Heedlessness, Hardness of Heart).

- “Step 1: Accept your Inner Truth
- Step 2: Make a Commitment
- Step 3: Find a Mentor
- Step 4: Make Time
- Step 5: Self-Reflection
- Step 6: Apply Spiritual Medicine
- Step 7: Continually Strive”

PART 2: ENGAGING HOLISTICALLY AND JOYFULLY WITH THE QURAN – TADABBUR INTRODUCTION

Imagine someone whom you knew truly loved you, and whom you owe your love and gratitude to, left you a letter or a voice note that had all the keys to success and joy in this life and the next?

Imagine receiving a letter that answers your deepest questions and guides you through your greatest challenges. Wouldn't you want to read it, understand it, and reflect on it again and again? That's the Quran — a timeless message of Divine love, guidance, and renewal from Our Creator and Sustainer who loves, cares, and protects us.

One of my teachers beautifully describes the Quran as a love letter from The All-Loving. Our relationship with the Quran is one that can be built on **love and longing** to draw nearer to Our Creator and Sustainer, The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful. Another one of my Quran sheikhas, Um Abdullah, describes the Quran as the "Soul of life and the life of the soul".

The Qur'an is not simply a manual of do's and don'ts. It is a timeless source of wisdom and compassion, providing us with direction and purpose on our journey, healing for our hearts and fears, and immersing us in mercy in every chapter of our lives and the greater universe. It invites us to reflect deeply, engage holistically, transform within and live its message of God consciousness and service to humanity. And with that, arrive at a sense of real and eternal joy, a deep human need we all long for, which reaches beyond the worldly accumulations of wealth and status. Thus, I think of **the Quran as the handbook for ultimate success and joy.**

In addition to having direction and clarity through Divine guidance, experiencing healing for our hearts by the mercy of God, in order to arrive at eternal joy, one of our deepest human needs is also to feel seen, heard, valued and understood. The Quran allows us to experience that, not just by anyone but by Allah, The One who created us and loves us more than any other:

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

"How could He not know His Own creation? For He 'alone' is the Most Subtle, All-Aware"

(Quran, 67:14).

Think of how relieved we feel when we have a conversation or relationship with a loved one who truly understands us? The Quran speaks directly to us and validates our experiences- in it we can find our stories, our voices, our feelings, and experience how it speaks to, mends, and uplifts us.



In his Arabic book, “The Art of Tadabbur in the Noble Quran”, Dr. Issam Ibn Salih Al-Uwayid includes many of the descriptions of the Quran from the Quran. Many of the verses below include excerpts from larger verses.

Guidance vs. Misery.

Surah Taha (20:123–124)

...فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى
وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

...When guidance comes from Me, whoever follows it will neither go astray nor suffer. But whoever turns away from My remembrance will live a constricted life and be raised blind on the Day of Resurrection.

Surah Al-A'raf (7:52)

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

And We have certainly brought them a Book which We explained with knowledge — a guidance and mercy for a people who believe.

Spirit – Surah Ash-Shura (42:52)

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَٰكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

And so We have sent to you ‘O Prophet’ a spirit by Our command. You did not know of ‘this’ Book and faith ‘before’. But We have made it a light, by which We guide whoever We will of Our servants. And you are truly leading ‘all’ to the Straight Path—

Clear Proof and Light – Surah An-Nisa’ (4:174)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا

O humanity, there has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light.

The Truth — Surah Fatir (35:31)

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ

The Book We have revealed to you 'O Prophet' is the truth, confirming what came before it. Surely Allah is All-Aware, All-Seeing of His servants.

Mighty — Surah Fussilat (41:41)

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ...

...Indeed, it is a mighty and inviolable Book.

Guardian (Muhayymin) — Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:48)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ...

And We have revealed to you the Book in truth, confirming what came before it of the Scripture and as a guardian over it.

Blessed — Surah Sad (38:29)

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

'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

Admonition — Surah Yunus (10:57)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

O humanity, there has come to you an admonition from your Lord.

Healing — Surah Al-Isra' (17:82)

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

..And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers

Reminder — Surah Al-Muddathir (74:49)

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذِكْرِ مُّعْرِضِينَ

So what is the matter with them that they turn away from the Reminder?

Mercy — Surah An-Nahl (16:89)

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً...

And We have revealed to you the Book as a clarification for all things, and as guidance and mercy.

Noble — Surah Al-Waqi'ah (56:77)

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ

Indeed, it is a noble Qur'an.

Glorious — Surah Al-Buruj (85:21)

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ

'Rather, it is a glorious Qur'an.

Criterion — Surah Al-Furqan (25:1)

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

Blessed is the One Who sent down the Decisive Authority to His servant, so that he may be a warner to the whole world.

Insights — Surah Al-Jathiyah (45:20)

هَذَا بَصِيرٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

.This 'Quran' is an insight for humanity—a guide and mercy for people of sure faith.

Clarification — Surah An-Nahl (16:89)

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

‘Consider, O Prophet,’ the Day We will call against every faith-community a witness of their own. And We will call you to be a witness against these ‘people of yours’. We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy, and good news for those who ‘fully’ submit.

Are these descriptions not enough to awaken us to what we deprive ourselves of when we turn away from the Qur’an?

Which of these descriptions are you seeking?

Which one speaks to you? You may be seeking different aspects of the beauty and depth of the Quran depending on your circumstance.

TADABBUR: DEEP REFLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE QURAN

There are keys to unlocking the beauty and depth of the Qur'an, through tadabbur – a practice of engaging holistically with the Quran through heart, body, mind and soul to encompass its meanings and practices comprehensively.

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an (earnestly seeking to understand it)? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” (Quran 47:24)

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

“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.” (Quran 38:29)

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies. (Quran 4:82)

Abu Abdur Rahman reported: The companions would learn to recite ten verses from the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him. They would not take another ten verses until they understood the knowledge and deeds they contained. They would say, “We learned sacred knowledge and action together.” 1

When Aisha was asked about the Prophet (peace be upon him), she said “His character was the Quran.” 2

1 Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, hadith 23482.

2 Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 746.

TADABBUR NOTES

***Tadabbur* moves us:**

- from recitation to relationship
- from information to transformation
- from obligation to joy

***Tadabbur* is:**

- slowing down,
- listening with presence,
- asking what Allah is teaching me through this verse.

***Tadabbur* is not:**

- deep knowledge of tafsir,
- academic analysis,
- perfection in understanding.

Tadabbur is **accessible to every heart**. For youth, tadabbur:

- begins with **listening and noticing**,
- encourages meaning-making in age-appropriate ways.

Adults facilitate tadabbur by **asking gentle questions** and holding space, not by supplying all the answers immediately.



ENGAGING DEEPLY WITH QURAN AS A KEY TO GOD'S CLOSENESS, WELL-BEING AND JOY



The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"..Oh Allah...I ask You with every name that You have named Yourself with or revealed in Your Book (Quran), or taught to any of Your creation or kept with Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You that You make the Quran the life of my heart, and the light of my chest and the banisher of my sadness and the reliever of my distress."*

"The best among you [Muslims] are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." (Al-Bukhari)

"Allah has His own people among humankind. The Companions said: "O Messenger of Allah, who are they?" He said: "The people of the Quran—they are the people of Allah and those who are closest to Him"" (Ibn Mâjah)

I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, "The Qur'an and its people who applied it, will be brought on the Day of Resurrection preceded with Surat Al-Baqarah and Surat Al-'Imran arguing on behalf of those who applied them" [Muslim]

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Full, Holistic Experience of the Quran

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْكِتَابِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانٍ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن هَادٍ ۚ ٢٣

‘It is’ Allah ‘Who’ has sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin ‘and hearts’ of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of ‘the mercy of’ Allah. That is the guidance of Allah, through which He guides whoever He wills. But whoever Allah leaves to stray will be left with no guide. (39:23)

Healing, Guidance, Mercy, and Joy: Let’s Listen with Our Hearts

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُم مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O humanity, there has come to you a counsel from your Lord, and a cure for what is in the hearts, and guidance and mercy for the believers.” (10:57)

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

Say, “With the grace of Allah and with His mercy (this book has been revealed). So they should rejoice in it. It is much better than that (wealth) which they accumulate”. (10:58)

3 Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, hadith 23482.



BENEFITS OF TADABBUR

Spiritual and Emotional Benefits of Tadabbur

- Deepens Connection with Allah and strengthens faith – Transforms recitation into deeper relationship and presence with Allah’s words
- Softens, Purifies and Heals the Heart
- Increases Tranquility (Sakinah) and Trust in Allah (Tawakkul); creates calmness and reassurance, especially in times of adversity, as one internalizes Allah’s wisdom, compassion, and forgiveness
- Revives Hope and Gratitude

Intellectual and Moral Benefits

- Strengthens Understanding, Critical Thinking and Connecting Verses, principles, and life experiences to nurture wisdom
- Cultivates Moral Awareness and Ihsan – transforming Qur’anic values into everyday action and compassion.
- Inspires Purpose and Clarity by realigning one’s goals with Divine purpose and clarifies direction in times of confusion

Educational and Social Benefits

- Promotes Emotional Intelligence – learn about empathy, self-regulation, and compassion through reflective engagement with Qur’anic stories and values.
- Encourages Meaningful Dialogue and Belonging – Shared reflection builds connection within classrooms and communities fostering spiritual and emotional safety.
- Transforms Learning into Living – bridges learning about and living the Qur’an

Sheikh A. Al-Arabi describes the Quran as follows: “The Quran is the guide for my heart, healer of my soul, guide for my senses, purifier for my mind, protector of my personality, guidance in all aspects”.

TADABBUR PRACTICE: ONE VERSE, ONE INSIGHT

Choose one verse (even a single phrase). You are not aiming for many insights — just **one sincere connection**.

• Verse:



.....

.....

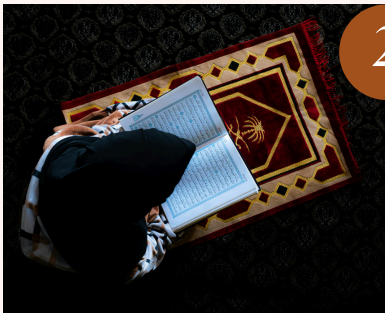
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• One word or idea that touched my heart:



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• One emotion it evoked:



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• One intention it inspired:



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JOYFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE QUR'AN



Joy in Qur'anic engagement does not mean constant happiness. It means:

- reassurance in adversity
- hope in uncertainty,
- comfort in returning to Allah,
- trust that His words speak to our realities.

We are given a powerful example of the magnitude of the Quran's majestic message if it were revealed to a mountain:

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَاهُ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأُمُثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Had We sent down this Qur’ān to a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, burst apart out of awe for Allah. We cite such examples for people, so that they may ponder” (Quran 59:21)

A. Helwa shares: “It is amazing to think that a majestic and powerful mountain would crumble beneath the word of God, but the garden of the human heart has been honoured and created specifically by God to be able to receive the rains of revelation”

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THE RISE FRAMEWORK™ FOR HOLISTIC, JOYFUL QUR'ANIC ENGAGEMENT

(Developed by Dr. Raghad Ebied, Ihsan Education ©)

"It will be said to the companion of (the one devoted to) the Quran: Recite and rise as you recited in the world! Verily, your rank is determined by the last verse you recite." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, hadith 11.)

The RISE Framework offers a heart-centered pathway for engaging holistically with the Qur'an—integrating reflection, purification, and lived excellence.

R — Read with Presence

Personal or Student Reflection: What is Allah inviting me to notice at this moment?

Educator Reflection: How will we help students slow down before engaging? Example: 60 seconds of silence, breathing, or intention-setting

I — Internalize the Meaning

Personal or Student Reflection: What meaning is Allah placing in my heart through this verse?

Educator Reflection: How will students reflect without pressure? Example: one gentle question, journaling, or drawing

S — Self-Purify (Tazkiyah)

Personal or Student Reflection: What within me needs to be refined, healed, or realigned through this guidance?

Educator Reflection: How will we normalize a positive growth mindset instead of shame? Example: language of "reset" and "renew" rather than "punishment"

E — Excel through Ihsan

Personal or Student Reflection: How can I embody this guidance with Ihsan today?

Educator Reflection: How will we highlight sincerity and effort over performance? Example: affirming presence, kindness, or honesty

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FACILITATING SURAT AL-FATIHAH: GUIDING YOUNG HEARTS THROUGH THE OPENING TO DIVINE MERCY



Surat al-Fatihah is often memorized early, yet its depth is rarely experienced. This section supports educators and parents in facilitating reflective, age-appropriate engagement with al-Fatihah as:

- a daily conversation with Allah,
- a source of reassurance and guidance,
- a framework for trust, hope, and moral grounding.

Al-Fatihah offers young people a complete spiritual map — who Allah is, who we are, and how we turn to Him.

Key Principles

- Young people are navigating identity, autonomy, and emotional intensity.
- Resistance is often a signal, not a failure.
- Joy grows through love, compassion and relationship building

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS (FOR EDUCATORS)

1

How do I respond when students disengage or act uninterested?

2

Do my expectations allow space for curiosity and questioning?

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS (FOR EDUCATORS)

3

How do I model sincerity and humility with the Qur'an?

4

Am I allowing students to encounter the Qur'an as mercy, not pressure?

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COACHING STRATEGIES

- Use open-ended prompts rather than yes/no questions.
- Normalize not having all the answers.
- Validate emotions without validating harmful behavior.
- Offer reflection as invitation, not obligation.
- Celebrate effort and insight, not correctness.



SUGGESTED FLOW FOR A SESSION ON SURAT AL-FATIHAH: BALANCE BETWEEN LOVE, MERCY AND REVERENCE

1. Opening Invitation

Invite students gently: “We recite al-Fatihah every day — today we’ll slow down and listen to what it’s teaching us about Allah and ourselves.”

2. Verse-by-Verse Reflective Prompts (Choose 2–3, not all)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah The Most Compassionate The Most Merciful

- What do you notice about how Allah introduces Himself?
- How does it feel to begin with mercy?

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praise is for Allah—Lord of all worlds

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ,

The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

- What does it mean that Allah cares for all worlds?
- Where do you see signs of care in your own life?
- What are you grateful to Allah for?

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgment.

- What does it mean that Allah is ultimately in charge?
- How can this bring comfort when things feel unfair?
- How does accountability help us grow?

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

You 'alone' we worship and You 'alone' we ask for help.

- What does it mean to need help?
- When do you turn to Allah for support?
- What unhealthy attachments do I have in my heart do I need to let go of to embrace my complete submission and seeking help from Allah ?
- How does it feel to know we are not meant to handle everything alone?

Educator note:

This verse is powerful for discussing dependence, vulnerability, and trust.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Guide us along the Straight Path,

- What does guidance look like for someone your age?
- What helps you make good choices? What are the top 1-2 areas you would like to work on in the next three months to strengthen you to be on the straight path?

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

the Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.

- What does it feel like to be blessed and guided in character and choices?
- What can I do to surround myself with those who are blessed and guided?
- What helps us find our way back when we feel lost?

Educator note:

Focus on growth and return, not fear or labeling

3. Closing Reflection

Invite students to complete one sentence (spoken or written):

- “After reflecting on al-Fatihah, I feel...”
- “One thing I want to remember when I recite it is...”

SURAT AL FATIHA REFLECTION: THE KEY TO THE QURAN

Surat Al Fatiha unlocks the keys to understanding the Quran's main messages. It is known in various hadiths as the 'Mother of the Quran', the 'healer', the '7 oft repeated verses', the 'greatest surah in the Quran' and a 'light'. It is a form of prayer (supplication) to Allah where we ask and we are answered by His Grace.

Surat Al-Fatiha establishes our relationship with Allah and outlines the three main components of love, hope, and fear or reverence. Allah knows the nature of the human being – that we are primarily motivated by fear of pain and pursuit of pleasure. However beyond those two primary motivators is the original and highest motive which is love. "All praise to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds" establishes our relationship first and foremost based on love with Allah (SwT). Allah comes from 'illah' – which means "The One worshiped, The refuge, The One loved with an intense love, and The One that minds cannot fully comprehend (cited from Dr. Jinan Yousef's class on Names of Allah).

We can better understand the significance of Surah al-Fatiha as a type of beautiful and daily conversation with Allah by this hadith, Abu Hurairah (R.A) reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said:

"Allah, the Glorious and Exalted said, "I have divided the prayer between Myself and my servant equally and My servant shall be granted what he asked for." Therefore, when the servant says, 'All praises and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds', Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' When he says, 'The All-Merciful, the Most Merciful, 'Allah says, 'My servant has extolled Me.' When he says, 'Master of the Day of Judgment,' Allah says, 'My servant has glorified Me.' When he says, 'You Alone we worship and Your aid Alone do we seek,' Allah says, 'this is between Me and My servant and My servant shall have what he requested.' When he says, 'Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those whom You have favored, not [the path] of those who have earned [Your] anger, nor of those who have gone astray,' Allah says, 'this is for My servant and My servant shall have what he asked for.' "(Muslim).

Dr. Adnan Rajeh identifies the following themes addressed in the surah:

1. Universality. العالمية
2. Empathy. الرحمة
3. Service. العبودية
4. Belonging. الأمة
5. Oneness of Allah (The Praiseworthy). التوحيد
6. Guidance. الهداية
7. Incorruptibility. الاستقامة

We are first reminded of the importance of *hamd* – gratitude to Allah and that one of the reasons that we are increased in blessings is gratitude: "... 'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more...' (Quran 14:7). We are also told about the significance of gratitude in the hadith : **"Verily, the best servants of Allah on the Day of Resurrection are those who constantly praised Him."** (Source: al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr lil-Ṭabarānī 18/124) and **"The best remembrance is to declare there is no God but Allah. The best supplication is to declare all praise is due to Allah."** (Source: Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3383).

Next we are introduced to Allah as "Rab" – which according to an article by Dr. Zainab Alwani on "Transformational Teaching", means the 'Sustainer, Cherisher of the worlds, and caretaker' connected to tarbiyya which means to "to raise and nourish at every stage until the goal is attained." Allah is The Caretaker, Sustainer and Nourisher of our hearts, bodies, minds and souls. How could we not love Allah (SwT)?

Next we are introduced to the concept of hope in Allah (SwT) through His attributes Arrahman, Arraheem (The Most Merciful, The Most Compassionate). Allah's mercy surrounds us in every single aspect of our existence, from the time we are protected in layer upon layer in three veils of darkness as fetuses as explained in (39:6), to the time we live on earth with the sky raised over us without pillars as explained in (31:10), to how Allah sent us the Prophet (peace be upon him) as a form of mercy to the worlds (21:107), to how the Quran continues to be there for us as a mercy (31:1-3). His mercy is all encompassing (7:156) and beyond the mercy of a mother with her own child.

God's mercy doesn't just embrace all of His creations – humans, animals, oceans, mountains, planets, galaxies and more. It also encompasses all of the human's inner nature in all of its complexity – His mercy encompasses all of your emotions and experiences. It encompasses your fears, your anxieties, your sadness, your uncertainty, your pain, your disappointments, your challenges, your weakness, and your falls. And it also encompasses your wins, your joys, your relief, your strength, your contentment, your hopes, and your dreams. So take them all to Him and let him hold you and carry you with His mercy through the fall and through the rise.

It all began with mercy when He begins every single chapter in the Quran with the exception of one with In the Name of God, The Most Merciful, The Most Compassionate and when He describes himself first and foremost as The Most Merciful, Most Compassionate in Surat Al-Fatiha which we receive in every single prayer multiple times a day.

Then, after the introduction of the relationship with Allah based on love and mercy, we are reminded of Allah as “The Master of The Day of Judgement” and of our return to Him on that day. We are reminded to be cautious of having committed oppression towards ourselves or towards others. This should not be a debilitating fear but a type of awareness and accountability that justice will be served that day and there will be no oppression. Understanding that Allah is the ‘Malik” – Ruler and Owner of that day and all that lies in the heavens and the earth awakens us to the reality that we do not own anything.

Understanding that we do not own anything also enables us to have immense gratitude for these blessings and liberates us from becoming too attached to them, so we recognize that if the blessing is taken away or removed, we do not feel alone or are in despair because we recognize Allah is enough for us, that to Him we belong, and to Him we will return.

We do not even own our own bodies, minds, hearts and souls – they are gifts entrusted to us for a time and they will be returned to their Creator and Owner. This pushes us to ponder on how we want to use and return this trust we were given for a time – how do we want to use and treat the blessing of our bodies, hearts, minds and souls? How will we nourish them, and in which way will we use them ?

We are told in a hadith:

“The son of Adam will not pass away from Allah until he is asked about five things:

How he lived his life

How he utilized his youth

With what means did he earn his wealth

How did he spend his wealth

What did he do with his knowledge.” (Tirmidhi)

So let us ask ourselves how do we want our return to Allah to be? How do we want to be able to answer these questions?

Next, if we understand that Allah is The One whom we love most, The Ultimate Refuge, Our Caretaker and Sustainer (Rabb), The All-Merciful (Arrahman), The All-Compassionate (Arraheem), The Owner and Master of the Day of Judgement (Al-Malik) and temper our over-attachments to fleeting temporary pleasures, we can truly embody “You alone do we worship, You alone do we seek help” because He is The Only One worthy of worship, The One we will return to, and The One who can ultimately help us.

This verse brings together two of the most important matters of the heart which are sincerity in ‘You alone do we worship’ and tawakul (reliance on Allah) in ‘You alone do we seek help’. Sincerity is connected to the truth of understanding we will return to Allah, and that our intentions are for His sake and ultimate help comes from Him. Muslim psychologist, Dr. Marwa Assar, explains having sincerity allows us to declutter mentally, emotionally, and internally from many attachments which can create inner conflict and attachment to outcomes that are beyond our control. When our intentions are for the sake of Allah, we trust in the outcomes that Allah holds for us. This verse, coming in the plural form, also reminds us of the importance of belonging to a community and supporting one another in worship and seeking help from Allah.

Finally, we arrive at the dua we make – 17 times a day, and the dua is for guidance, which is greater than any other blessing because guidance gives us direction, clarity, purpose, knowledge about God, nearness to Him and in sha Allah success in this world and in the next. Guidance protects us when we are bombarded with messages about who we should be and what we should be doing from society.

We ask for guidance, once again as a collective, in plural form, emphasizing the importance of community to support us with guidance to stay on the straight path. Staying on the straight path entails istiqamah – consistency and steadfastness and anything of value requires consistency.

The prophet (peace be upon him said): “The most beloved of deeds to Allah are those that are most consistent, even if it is small.” (Bukhari). Dr. Assar shares that Istiqamah requires showing up and dedicating ourselves to the path of guidance we have chosen, even when we don’t ‘feel’ like it.

Just like we go to school, work, or commit to anything even when we don’t ‘feel’ like it, committing to a path of faith and devotion to God cannot be dependent only on when we ‘feel’ like it or experience instant gratification because emotions are states which will fluctuate. Our submission to Allah helps us to stay the course and reminds us that we do not surrender to anything, including our feelings, or anyone but Him

Finally we are reminded about the importance of having a good support system through friendships and a community which supports our journey to Allah when we are told ‘the path of those whom you have blessed’.

May we be of them. May Surat Al-Fatiha open our hearts to the beauty of the Quran, the beauty of faith, and the beauty of continuing to seek closeness to Allah.

–R.Ebied

LIVING WITH THE QUR'AN: HEARTWORK AND PRACTICE

- Begin with a sincere niyyah (intention) and dua (prayer) — e.g., “Dear God, I intend to draw nearer to you and the noble Quran – your message to my heart. Please open the doors of your mercy and grace for me on this journey. Oh Allah, make us among the people of the Quran – those who are Your People and special ones ”.
اللهم اجعلنا من أهل القرآن الذين هم أهلك وخاصتك
- Purify the Heart (Tazkiyah). Hearts that are softened are more receptive to the Quran. Seek forgiveness (istighfar) often. Avoid what hardens the heart (envy, arrogance, heedlessness, sins). Surround yourself with gatherings of God’s remembrance, beauty, and truth.
- Build a Loving Relationship with the Qur’an with longing for closeness to Allah, and not just reading to finish, but reading to be transformed. Ask with every verse: “What is Allah teaching my heart here?” “How can I live this meaning today?”
- Begin listening to some of your favourite chapters from the Quran, even if Arabic is not your first language and you do not comprehend the Arabic. The habit of letting your heart listen to the Quran will start to soften it in sha Allah. Begin reading some translations or reflections on the Quran from sources such as The Clear Quran by Dr. Mustafa Khattab. Choose a Qur’an journal to begin recording your reflections, heartfelt questions, and the challenges you encounter on your path of spiritual growth.
- Recite with presence and beauty. Find a Quran teacher or join a class to begin your journey with the Quran in a way that provides holistic engagement. Learning to read the Arabic and Quran tajweed is important while also learning to read the deeper meanings of the themes and messages of the Quran in order to apply it and benefit from it. Let your voice soften with humility and awe — as if you’re standing before your Beloved. You may choose to have different teachers or classes to meet these goals. You can start with a commitment of 1-2 hours a week, and you will start to see the blessings in your life in sha Allah.
- Be Consistent – Allah loves continuity over quantity. Even if you recite one page, reflect on one verse, or act on one teaching daily, that consistency begins to transform your heart and your life.

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REFLECTIONS FOR EDUCATORS:

1

How might my presence shape a student's relationship with the Qur'an?

2

What does joyful engagement look like in my classroom, home, or community space?

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REFLECTIONS FOR EDUCATORS:

3

How can I model Ihsan in the way I teach and guide?

4

How can I build and invite my students to approach the Qur'an with love and longing to connect more deeply with Allah?

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REFLECTIONS FOR EDUCATORS:

5 Does my teaching balance awe, reflection, and practical application?

6 How can I model a deeper heart-centered connection to the Qur'an in my own teaching?

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JOURNALING PROMPTS FOR STUDENTS:

How is my current relationship with the Qur'an?

What are some of the current barriers I am experiencing in building a stronger relationship with the Qur'an?

JOURNALING PROMPTS FOR STUDENTS:

What goals do I have for my relationship with the Qur'an?
[Questions Adapted from Dr. Alwani]

CLOSING AND NOTE FOR EDUCATORS & PARENTS

May God bless you for investing the time in reading and learning on how to engage holistically and joyfully with the Quran. Young people long for the Qur'an to be presented as a companion for the heart. When adults model presence, humility, and mercy, joyful engagement becomes possible.

May you revive the joy of the Quran in the hearts of the people you teach, parent, nurture, and support. May this work be purely for His sake, may He accept it, may He bless it and may He enable it to be a reason for the upliftment of our homes, families, schools, and communities. Ameen.

If there are any mistakes in this work or feedback or request for further support for educators, students, or communities, please contact us at info@ihsanedu.com. And please feel free to sign up for our newsletter and review other resources at www.ihsanedu.com.

For Quran reflections, feel free to visit: <https://quranreflect.com/umhadi>

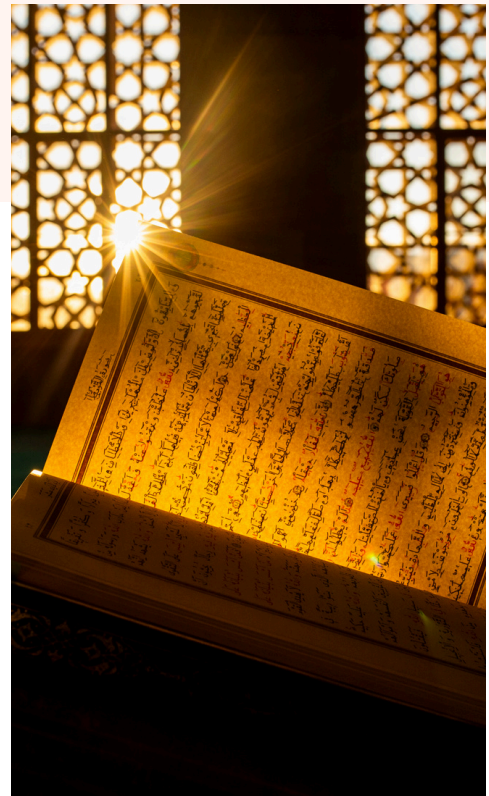
A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

I am grateful first and foremost to Allah – The Nurturer and Cherisher who enables our hearts to access and in sha Allah learn, love, and live His Divine Words. I am then grateful to my mother who introduced me to the Quran as a child and supported me with learning how to read it and preserve humble parts of it by heart to recite in my prayers.

This humble work is also the fruit of God's generosity with me in granting me the immense privilege and honour to learn from female Quran teachers, scholars and sisters who taught me to bring my heart to the Quran so it can heal, uplift, inspire and empower.

There are many teachers and sisters my heart is grateful for, including Dr. Zainab Alwani, Shaykha Um Abdullah, C.D, S.M, and I pray Allah will bless them and their families with His countless blessings. These teachers and sisters, have graciously taught, supported or encouraged me to approach the Quran with love, humility, and vulnerability knowing that it is the safest, most gentle, yet most powerful space to bring our full humanity.

May God bless us and our families to be among His people, the people of Quran, the people He loves, in the places He loves, doing that which brings us closer to His love. Ameen.



**"May we see and listen for
signs of Divine Love.
God, cast a love unto
us from you,
Which heals our hearts,
Relieves our stress,
Strengthens our
determination,
Drives our hopes,
Makes our dreams come true
And lights up our souls.
Ameen."**

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Ameen.

LET THE QURAN SPEAK TO YOU:



When the heart is too consumed by worries to find the right words to say,
Or even a prayer to utter,
Let the Quran speak to you,
Let God's divine words heal you,
Let His message of mercy and healing lift you,
Let His promise of support carry you,
Let His knowledge of the innermost yearnings of your heart comfort you,
Let His light shine into the darkest corners of your soul,
Let His love fill every wound and mend every break,
And remember your heart is precious to a Creator and Sustainer who created the
heavens and the earth, the oceans and mountains, the moon and the stars,
You are seen, you are heard, you are validated in your pain and in your struggle,
Because you were created as a dignified human being ,
With a heart that has the capacity to carry what the mountains can't carry,
With a heart that has the potential to carry divine words meant to heal humanity,
With a heart that has the ability to transform pain into purpose and trials into
triumphs,
When it's anchored in The Most-Loving, Most Compassionate.

-R. Ebied

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. R. Ebied is a grateful mother; author; education, training, and research consultant; emerging scholar; and founder of Ihsan Education™, which inspires ihsan – moral beauty – to cultivate spiritual leadership, compassion, and resilience among individuals and communities in support of holistic well-being and meaningful service to society. She has completed her PhD in Education with a focus on compassionate and resilience based approaches to support holistic well being, equity and belonging for diverse students including Muslim students and communities. She has also completed an undergraduate Arts degree in psychology before acquiring her Bachelor's of Education and becoming an Ontario Certified Teacher, as well as completing a Masters in Educational Leadership with a focus on best practices for teacher development programs. She has also received a variety of certifications and training including spiritual care and compassion cultivation training from Stanford University and Hospital, and Resilience Expert Training from Dalhousie University. She brings over 15+ years of experience in leadership education, development, teaching, training, research and scholarship in a variety of settings including schools, health, university, government, private, and non-profit organizations.

She is an ongoing student of classical Islamic education with Muslim scholars and teachers, many of whom are female and hold ijaza (formal authorization to teach and transmit the Qur'an and Islamic Sciences), focusing on Quranic studies, Tafseer and Tadabbur (exegesis and reflection on the Quran). One of her teachers is Dr. Zainab Alwani, Founding Director and the first Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD) and Vice Chair of the Fiqh Council of North America. She has also been involved with faith-based teaching and mentoring locally and internationally, including delivering spiritual development, coaching, mentoring, and Engaging with the Quran programs to women, students and educators.

Through her work, she integrates faith, heart-centered pedagogy, positive psychology and contemporary educational insights to inspire positive change in schools, leadership, and communities.

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