



Life With Allah

Connecting to The Creator

تَدَبُّرٌ

Tadabbur

Reflecting Upon the Qur'an

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Tadabbur

Reflecting Upon the Qur'an



Life With Allah

الحياة مع الله



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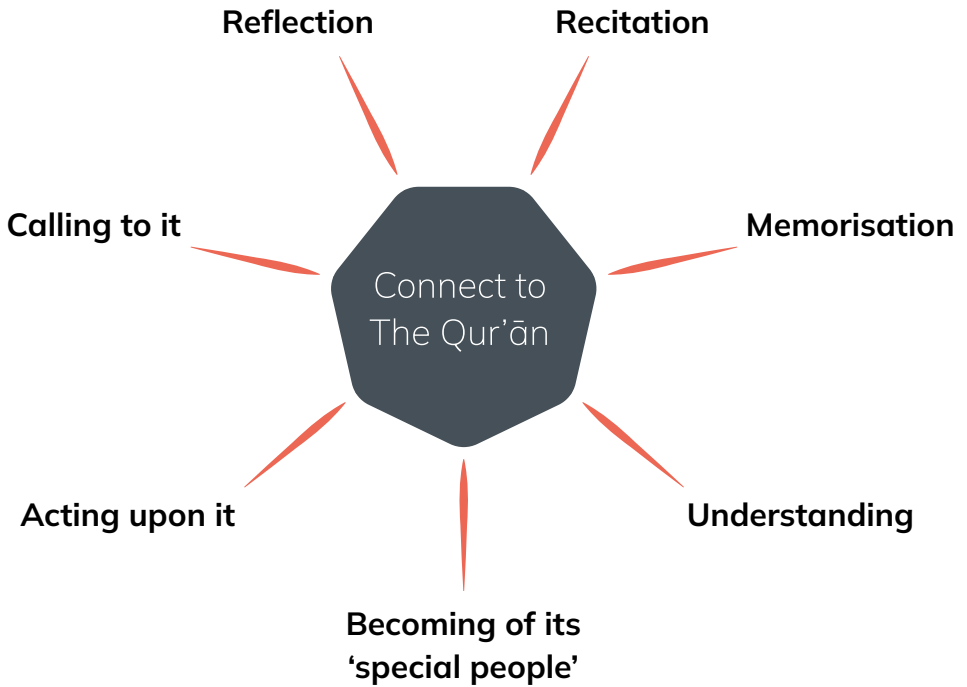
كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا
آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“This is a blessed Book which We revealed to you, that they may reflect upon its verses, and those with understanding may take heed.” (38:29)

The Qur'ān is the eternal book of guidance. It is a cure for every disease - be it spiritual or physical. It is a light which illuminates the path of truth amidst the darkneses of falsehood. The Qur'ān contains legal rulings for a human to live on Allah's earth, as His subservient slaves. It is a book of blessings and eternal wisdom; a warner and a giver of good news.

Accordingly, reciting the Qur'ān or memorising its words is in itself not enough. **Although both of these acts are essential, they must be accompanied by reflection and a deep commitment to 'live' the Qur'ān.**

“ We find that the majority of the Muslims today have **limited themselves** to repeating the words (of the Qur'ān) and chanting it melodiously in funerals, graveyards and homes, and to carrying muṣḥafs or abandoning them in the homes. And they forgot – or appeared to forget- that **the greatest blessing of the Qur'ān is in fact in reflecting upon its verses, seeking to understand it, embodying it as one's character**, acting upon its commands and staying away from its prohibitions.” (al-Zarqānī 🕌)



Allah says, “**Do they not, then, ponder upon the Qur’an?** Had it been from someone other than Allah, they would have found in it a great deal of discrepancy” (4:82); and “This is a blessed Book which We revealed to you, so that they **reflect upon its verses**, and those with understanding may take heed” (38:29).

Imām al-Qurtubī رحمته الله writes, “And this āyah contains the proof for **the obligation of knowing the Qur’an’s meanings**; and a proof that reciting slowly is better than reciting fast, as tadabbur cannot be performed correctly with fast recitation.”

Al-Sa' dī ﷺ explained, "Allah has commanded His servants to reflect on His Book, to ponder on its meanings, and to ponder deeply on its principles and lessons, along with pursuing whatever is necessary to achieve this noble aim. **Reflecting on the book of Allah is the key to knowledge and all sciences.** It is the source of all good and the fountain of all the sciences. It increases the **īmān** in one's heart and makes it firmly rooted in it.

The Qur'ān gives the slave the **ma'rifah** (knowledge and deep awareness) of his Lord; how all attributes of perfection belong to Him, and how He is pure from all deficiencies and shortcomings. It sets out the path that leads to Him, describes the characteristics of the people who are treading this path and what they will attain when they come to Him in the hereafter.

It informs about the real enemy, the path which will lead to punishment, the characteristics of the people who are treading this path, and how they will be justly punished. **The more the slave ponders upon the Qur'ān, the more he will increase in knowledge, good deeds and insight.**

For the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the pious predecessors, tadabbur was not a practice limited to Ramaḍān. It was their way of life. It was how they prayed.

For without tadabbur, there is no ṣalāh.



Reflect: The Qur'ān and You

How would you describe your relationship
with the Qur'ān?

When you recite the Qur'ān, do its words
pierce your mind?

Do its meanings penetrate your heart?

Does its beauty mesmerise you?

What does the Qur'ān mean to you?

“ From the greatest of voluntary acts through which Allah’s Love is earned, is reciting and pondering upon the Qur’ān.”
(Ibn Rajab 🕌)

Once Abū Bakr 🕌 said to the Prophet ﷺ, “O Messenger of Allah, you have become old.” He ﷺ said, “(The sūrahs) Hūd, al-Wāqī‘ah, al-Mursalāt, ‘Amma Yatasā‘alūn and Ithā al-Shamsu Kuwwirat have aged me” (Tirmidhī).

Imām al-Munāwī 🕌 mentioned that these sūrahs took a toll on the Prophet ﷺ because they contained descriptions of the horrors of the Day of Judgement and the punishments meted out to earlier nations. They prematurely aged him because he feared similar punishments afflicting his ummah.

Therefore, the Qur’ān cannot just be recited or chanted only for the sake of blessings. **Rather, it has to be read with reflection and contemplation.** The above ḥadīth demonstrates that the Qur’ān did not just enter the heart of the Prophet ﷺ, but that its impact was so profound that it physically affected him.



Why Your Heart Needs Tadabbur

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته الله wrote, “**There is nothing more beneficial for the heart than reading the Qur’ān with contemplation and reflection.** This is what inspires love and longing for Allah. It generates fear of Him and hope in Him. It makes one turn in repentance to Him and rely on Him. It causes one to fully submit to him, leave matters in His Hands and be pleased with His Decree. It inspires patience and gratitude and is a means of acquiring all of the characteristics which give life to and perfect the heart.

If people knew what recitation of the Qur’ān with contemplation contains, they would devote themselves to it at the expense of anything else. When one reads with reflection and comes across an āyah that **he needs to cure his heart, he repeats it.** He may repeat it a hundred times, or even throughout the entire night, as was reported about the Prophet ﷺ and the early predecessors. Hence, **reciting a single āyah of the Qur’ān with contemplation and reflection is better than reciting the entire Qur’ān without any contemplation or reflection.**

This is more beneficial for the heart, more likely to **increase** one’s īmān and leads one to **taste the sweetness of īmān** and the Qur’ān. This was the habit of the early predecessors, whereby one of them would repeat the same āyah throughout the night until morning came. Likewise, it has been reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood **repeating one āyah** till morning came.”

Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه said, “The Prophet ﷺ stood reciting an āyah and repeating it until morning came. The āyah was, ‘If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, indeed You, only You, are the Almighty, the All-Wise’ (5:118)” (Ibn Mājah).

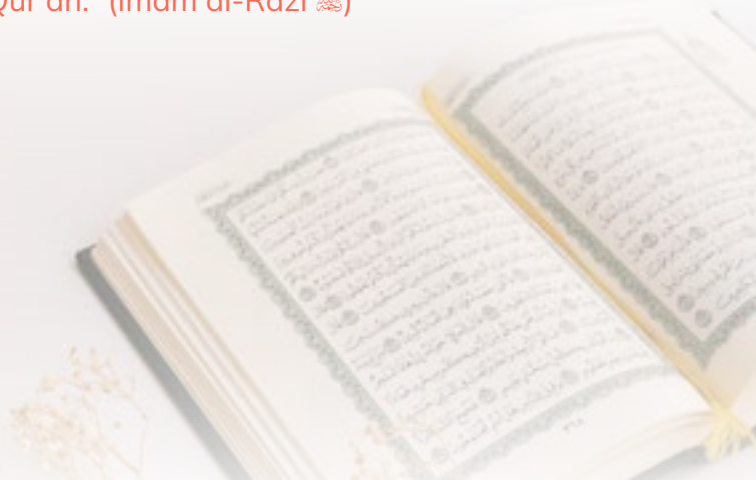
“ Do not scatter the Qur’ān (i.e. read it hurriedly) like poor-quality dates are scattered, and do not recite it quickly like poetry is recited. **Take a pause at its wonders, move the hearts with it**, and do not let your concern be to (merely) reach the end of the sūrah.” (‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ﷺ)

Tadabbur: The Route to Discovering the Secrets of the Qur’ān

Spending long hours with the book of Allah and reflecting on it will help us discover its amazing meanings and hidden insights.

Ibn ‘Āshūr ﷺ wrote, “Tadabbur is reflection and pondering, through which a person gains knowledge of the intended meanings. This only occurs in speech which is concise, yet comprehensive in meaning; so that **the more a person reflects, the more he discovers meanings which were previously not apparent to him.**”

“ As for the one who does not reflect, ponder and is not blessed with Allah’s help in this regard, he will remain ignorant of the amazing secrets mentioned in this Magnificent Qur’ān.” (Imām al-Rāzī ﷺ)



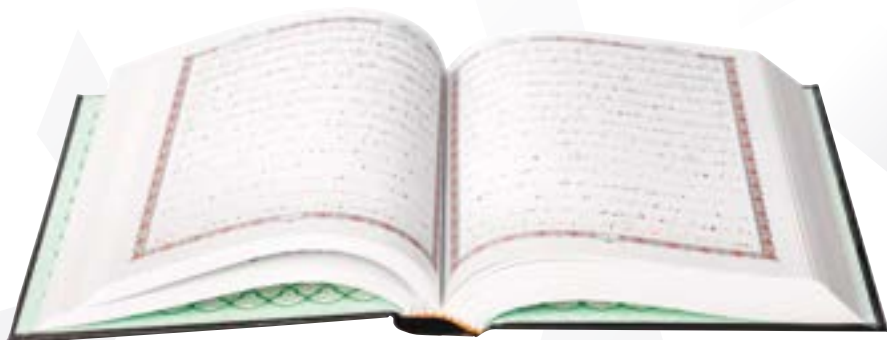
I have not seen anything that nourishes the mind and soul, protects the body, and guarantees success more than constantly engaging with the Book of Allah.
(Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ)

Tips for Reflecting Upon the Qur'an

Study the
Qur'an

Think of Who is
talking to you

Personalise it
to your life



Interact with
the āyāt

Feel the emotion
and repeat the āyah

Visualise what
you are reciting

Practical Tips for Tadabbur

a Think of Who is talking to you

When you begin reciting the Qur'ān, Imām al-Ghazālī رحمته advised that you should bring the Greatness of the One who is addressing you to the forefront of your mind. The words you are reciting did not originate from a human being; they are the words of the Lord of the worlds.

“I said to my nafs: ‘O nafs, recite the Qur'ān as though you (personally) heard it from Allah when He uttered it.’ I then felt the sweetness (of reciting the Qur'ān).”
(Sulaymān b. Maymūn رحمته)

b Personalise it to Your Life

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته said, “If you want to benefit from the Qur'ān, **gather your heart when it is recited, focus your hearing, and act like you are being directly addressed by Allah**, as it is an address from Him to you upon the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ. Allah said, ‘Indeed there is a reminder in that for whoever has a heart or whoever listens attentively with his heart present’ (50:37).”

Imām al-Ghazālī رحمته said, “One is to assume that **he is the one who is being addressed in every statement** in the Qur'ān. Hence if he hears a command or prohibition, he assumes that he is the one who is being commanded and prohibited. If he hears a promise or threat, he does the same. If he hears the stories of the past and those of prophets, he realises that entertainment is not the objective, but rather, it is for him to take lessons, and to extract from its content what he needs.”

Try to personalise the Qur'ān to your situation whilst reciting it. Relate it to your own life and your own experiences. Ask yourself: **What is Allah telling me? What is Allah asking me to do? How can I apply it to my life?**

The āyah above also alludes to the importance of having a healthy and sound heart. The Qur'ān can only benefit you if it finds a suitable recipient to enter: **a pure heart**. Your heart must be purified from shirk, sins, and the diseases of the heart (e.g. envy, pride, hatred, hypocrisy).

“Those before you saw the Qur'ān as a correspondence from their Lord; they would ponder upon it at night and review it in the day.” (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī 🕌)

c

Visualise

Think deeply about the words you are reciting and try to visualise the meaning they are conveying. For instance, when reading about the descriptions of Hell-fire in Juz ' Amma, **make the imagery come alive in your mind**. To achieve this, repeat the āyāt wherever necessary.

d

Feel the emotion and repeat the āyah

The Qur'ān was sent down for us to derive guidance from it and to increase our īmān in Allah, the Prophet ﷺ and the hereafter. Allah says, “And when His āyāt are recited to them, it increases them in īmān” (8:2).

Accordingly, when reciting an āyah about Paradise, **feel your longing for Paradise increasing**. On feeling this effect in your heart, continue to repeat this āyah. Similarly, when reciting an āyah about Hell-fire, **feel fear in your heart**.


On feeling this effect, keep repeating the āyah. Let it move you to the point of crying over it. Similarly, when reading an āyah about the greatness of Allah, feel shyness and awe before Him. **Keep repeating this āyah until you feel the effect of it in your heart.**

Try to recall the last time you heard Sūrah Yusuf in tarāwīḥ. Did you hear sniffing and people rummaging in their pockets for tissues when the imām recited the latter āyāt of the story? Even though our īmān is weak and we find it easier to cry at the stories which tug at our hearts, the principle is the same.

Whether your recitation includes a touching story or an āyah about the creative power of Allah, let it move you emotionally.

Let it pierce your heart.



“Son of Ādam, how will your heart soften when your only concern is to reach the end of the sūrah?”
(al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī )

Mālik b. Dīnār رضي الله عنه used to recite the āyah

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى
جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا
مُتَّصِدًّا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ

‘Had We sent down this Qur’ān to a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, burst apart from the awe for Allah...’ (59:21),

and then say,

“I swear to you, no slave truly believes in the Qur’ān except that his heart bursts open.”

Interact with the āyāt.

Strive to emulate the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by interacting with the āyāt you are reciting during voluntary prayers. When you come across an āyah about mercy, **stop and ask Allah for His mercy.** When you come across an āyah about punishment, **stop and ask Allah’s protection.** When you come across an āyah where you can make a du‘ā’, **stop and ask Allah.**

‘Awf b. Mālik ؓ said, “I stood up to pray along with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ one night. He got up and recited Sūrah al-Baqarah. When he came to an āyah of mercy, he stopped and made du‘ā’, and when he came to an āyah of punishment, he stopped and asked for Allah’s protection” (Abū Dāwūd).

Masrūq ؓ said, “Ā’ishah ؓ recited the āyah:

فَمَنْ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَانَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ
إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلُ نَدْعُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْبَرُّ الرَّحِيمُ

‘But Allah was gracious to us and protected us from the punishment of the scorching fire. We used to pray to Him before. He is surely the Most Kind, the Very Merciful’ (52:27).

Then she said, **‘O Allah, be gracious to us and protect us from the punishment of the scorching fire.’** A‘mash, one of the narrators, was asked if she said this in her ṣalāh.

He replied, “Yes” (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr).

‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ **had two black lines on his face due to weeping excessively.** Once, whilst he was patrolling Madinah at night, he passed by a house and heard a man reciting in his ṣalāh, “By Mount Tūr” (52:1), until he reached, “Indeed, the punishment

of your Lord will certainly take place— none will avert it” (52-7:8). He said, **“By the Lord of the Ka’ bah, this oath is the truth!”** He stepped down from his donkey and leaned on the wall. He remained there for a short time, and then returned home. For the next month, he remained ill. People would visit him, and not know the cause of his illness.

““ Whoever loves the Qur’ān loves Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.” (‘Abdullāh b. Mas’ūd ﷺ)



To achieve the above (points a-e), you will have to make an effort to study and understand the meanings and message of the Qur'ān. Some ways you can do this are:

- **Learn Arabic.** This will open the door to understanding the meaning of the Qur'ān.
- **Learn the meaning of the Qur'ān.** There are many classes, books, apps and videos dedicated to this subject. Even reading a simple translation is better than not reading one at all.
- **Attend Qur'ān classes.** Increase your knowledge of the Qur'ān by studying it along with the other sciences of the dīn.
- **Listen to reliable tafsīr** (explanation of the Qur'ān) lectures.
- Read reliable tafsīr books. Some of these have been translated into English
- Whenever you are reflecting on the words of the Qur'ān, **always take heed not to fall into the trap** of interpreting the book of Allah according to your own whims and desires, or speaking about His words without knowledge.

Once you have studied the meanings of an āyah and have understood its context and lessons, then you should memorise it, if you have not done so already. Thereafter, recite those āyāt in your ṣalāh - especially in tahajjud. Allah willing, you will feel a huge difference in the sweetness of your ṣalāh. Remember to:

(1) personalise, **(2)** visualise and **(3)** interact with the āyāt!

“Whoever desires knowledge should read the Qur'ān, for indeed it contains the knowledge of the earlier ones and the latter ones.” (‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ﷺ)

But I am not a scholar...?

There is a misconception amongst some people that tadabbur is limited to scholars. This is not true. The disbelievers were condemned in the Qur'ān for not doing tadabbur.

Allah said, “Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān, or are there locks upon (their) hearts” (47:24)?

Therefore, as believers, **we have no excuse for failing to perform tadabbur**. Tadabbur is essential to our lives and for building a strong connection with Allah.

“ Amongst **Shaytān's plots is to deter** the slaves of Allah from pondering over the Qur'an (tadabbur). This is because he knows that guidance is attained through tadabbur.”
(Ibn Hubayrah 🕌)

Tadabbur and ‘Living’ the Qur’ān

Tadabbur is not merely about extracting amazing gems from the Qur’ān. Rather, it should directly lead us to implementing the commandments of Allah and the sunnah of His beloved ﷺ.

Imām al-Ājurri رحمه الله describes the **companion of the Qur’ān**: “His concern when he begins reciting a sūrah is, ‘When will I take heed of what I recite?’ And his objective is not, ‘When will I complete the sūrah?’ Rather, his objective is, **‘When will I understand the message from Allah? When will I restrain myself? When will I take a lesson?’** This is because the recitation of the Qur’ān is an act of worship, and worship cannot be performed heedlessly.”

Sometimes we only focus on making our children memorise the Qur’ān, but we neglect to inspire and teach them the message and the meanings of the Qur’ān. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله said, “Certainly, slaves and children recite the Qur’ān and they have no knowledge of its meaning. **They memorised its letters but neglected its commands**, to the extent that one of them will say, “By Allah, I have recited the entire Qur’ān without missing out on any letter.” By Allah, he has missed out on all of it! **For there is no effect of the Qur’ān on his character and actions.** By Allah, it is not about memorizing its letters, and then neglecting its commands!”

“O Bearers of the Qur’ān! What has the Qur’ān planted in your hearts? For indeed the Qur’ān is the spring and irrigation of the hearts.” (Mālik b. Dīnār رحمه الله)

Do whatever you wish to get close to Allah ﷻ, but know you will never get closer to Him with anything more beloved to Him than His own words (i.e. the Qur'ān).
(Khabbāb ﷺ)

Recite the Qur'ān Slowly and Beautifully

In order to reflect upon the Qur'ān, it is vital to recite calmly and wholeheartedly.

Recite with tartīl

When reciting the Qur'ān, the Prophet ﷺ was instructed by Allah ﷻ to recite with 'tartīl' (73:4). Tartīl refers to reciting **slowly and calmly**, making each word distinct, and not exceeding the limits. Reciting like this ensures that the tongue, heart and the limbs and organs are in perfect harmony with each other. To recite with tartīl, an effort must be made to learn tajwīd. Reciting with tartīl will also help you do tadabbur.

Qatādah ؓ narrated that Anas b. Mālik ؓ was asked, "How was the recitation of the Prophet ﷺ?" He replied, "It was elongated. He then recited بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ elongating بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ , elongating الرَّحْمٰنِ and elongating الرَّحِیْمِ " (Bukhārī).

Pausing at the end of each āyah is essential as it gives you sufficient time to reflect on the words you are reciting. Umm Salamah ؓ said that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would break down his recitation of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah and would pause at the end of each āyah (Abū Dāwūd).

Ḥafṣah ؓ said, "I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ praying voluntary prayers (nawāfil) sitting, until a year before his death. He would pray his voluntary prayers sitting. He would recite the sūrah slowly and distinctly until it would seem to be longer than other sūrahs which were actually longer than it" (Muslim).

Sometimes we recite very fast to complete a sūrah. Similarly, we may witness ‘super high speeds’ in the tarāwīḥ prayers during Ramaḍān. However, this is contrary to the sunnah and does not help us attain the objectives of the Qur’ān. **Slow recitation is vital for absorbing the message of the Qur’ān and for reflecting on what Allah ﷻ is saying.** Repeating certain āyāt is critical if you want to **strengthen your imān** through the Qur’ān. This, however, is impossible if your aim is just to reach the end of a sūrah, juz or even the whole of the Qur’ān.

A man came to ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd ؓ and said, “I recite all the mufaṣṣal sūrahs in one rak‘ah.” Upon this ‘Abdullāh ؓ said, “(Do you recite it) hastily like the recitation of poetry? Indeed, there are people who recite the Qur’ān, but it does not go down beyond their collar bones. However, it **benefits when it enters the heart and becomes deeply-rooted in it.** The best of (the actions) in ṣalāh are bowing and prostration. I am quite aware of the similar sūrahs which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to combine together: two sūrahs in every rak‘ah” (Muslim).

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“There will emerge people from my ummah who will drink the Qur’ān as they drink milk.”**
(Ṭabarānī)

Explaining this ḥadīth, al-Munāwī ؒ wrote, “They recite it quickly with their tongues, without pondering on its meanings, nor reflecting on its commands. Rather, it passes over their tongues just as when milk is drunk, it quickly passes over their tongues.”

Beautify your voice

Strive to beautify your voice whilst reciting the Qur'ān, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Beautify the Qur'ān with your voices” (Abū Dāwūd). He ﷺ also said, “He who does not recite the Qur'ān melodiously is not one of us” (Abū Dāwūd).

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to hear the Prophet ﷺ recite the Qur'ān? His Companion al-Barā' b. 'Azib رضي الله عنه said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reciting *وَالَّذِينَ وَالرَّيْثُونَ* in 'Ishā' and I have never heard anyone who had a **better voice** or recitation than his” (Bukhārī).

The spiritual intensity of his recitation is indicated in the following ḥadīth: “**Allah does not listen to anything as He listens to the recitation of the Qur'ān by a Prophet who recites the Qur'ān audibly and melodiously**” (Bukhārī).

Numerous accounts from the Companions رضي الله عنهم give us a glimpse into their relationship with the Qur'ān and their beautiful recitation of it. Once the Prophet ﷺ said to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه, “If you were to see me, as I was listening to your recitation last night (you would have felt delighted). You have certainly been given a ‘flute’ from the flutes of the family of Dāwūd (i.e. a great melodious voice)” (Muslim).

Cry Whilst Reciting

The **purpose of melodious recitation** is not merely to ensure that the recitation of the Qur'ān sounds good; instead, it is to ensure that the recitation is beautiful, with **complete focus and khushū'**. Such a recitation would inevitably result in the heart being moved. It should increase your fear of Allah ﷻ and provide peace. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Of those who recite the Qur'ān with

the best voice is the one who, **when you hear him recite, you think that he fears Allah**" (Ibn Mājah).

When reciting the Qur'ān, try to cry as this was the practice of the pious people of the past. Allah ﷻ says, "When the āyāt of the Most Merciful were recited before them, they used to **fall down in prostration, weeping**" (19:58).

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed, this Qur'ān has descended with sadness. So, **when you recite it, cry. If you cannot cry, then try hard to do so.** And recite it melodiously, for he who does not recite it melodiously is not one of us" (Ibn Mājah).

Imām al-Nawawī رحمه الله says that crying during the recitation of the Qur'ān is, "A quality of those who have a deep awareness of Allah (ma'rifah) and it is a distinguishing feature of the pious servants of Allah... It has been reported that 'Umar b al-Khaṭṭāb رحمه الله led the congregation in the morning prayer, and recited Sūrah Yusuf. **He wept until his tears flowed over his collarbone.** Another narration of the report mentions that this occurred during 'Ishā', indicating that this happened repeatedly. Another narration mentions that he cried until **the people in the rows behind him heard his weeping.**"

“ It is mustahabb (recommended) to cry whilst reciting the Qur'ān, and when it is being recited. The way to achieve this is to **evoke sadness in the heart by reflecting** on the severe threats, warnings and promises; and then reflecting on one's shortcomings regarding them. And if this does not evoke sadness and crying, as it does to the elite (worshippers), then **he should cry over the lack of (being able to cry), as this is one of the greatest calamities.**"
(Imām al-Ghazālī رحمه الله)

Rate Your Recitation:

Would the Prophet ﷺ stand and listen to you recite?

‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said, “One night, at the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, I was late returning from ‘Ishā’. When I came after some time, he ﷺ said, ‘Where were you?’

I said, ‘I was listening to the recitation of a man from your Companions رضي الله عنهم; I have never heard a recitation or a voice like his from anyone.’”

She says, “So he got up and I got up with him, to go and listen to him. Then he turned to me and said, ‘This is Sālim, the freed slave of Abū Ḥudhayfah. All praise is for Allah who has created such men amongst my ummah’” (Ibn Mājah).

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