

MODULE 1

Class title: Qur'an and I - part 2 (2nd part of a 2 lesson series)

Aim of lesson:

Category: Worship

Class Format: Power Point Presentation

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Taooz*) *Aoodhubillahi min As Shaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du'a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* (Surah Ta-Ha 20: Verses 25-28)

Who remembers what we were talking about last week?

We were talking about our relationship with the Qur'an.

The first question that I asked you was what kind of relationship do you have with the Qur'an or if you even have a relationship at all? Did anybody think about that?

I had asked you to try to understand the meaning of Surah Al-Fatihah; to go home, pick up the Qur'an, look at the meaning and think about the meaning before you start your *salah*. Did anybody actually try to do that little experiment?

How did it go?

(Students share their experience – majority who did actually do it said it was useful)

Those of you who haven't tried it can perhaps try it today when you go home before your 'Isha *salah* or maybe tomorrow; whenever it's convenient for you. Before your *salah* pick up your Qur'an, just Surah Al-Fatihah because you recite it all the time in *salah*; it's not complete without Surah Al-Fatihah.

Ok, so last week we discussed how to have a relationship with the Qur'an. The first thing we need to do is to read the Qur'an. By reading we said first the basic reading of the text even without understanding; reading it correctly with *tajweed* which is the science of reading the Qur'an in Arabic. It is very important to recite it in the language that Allah (swt) chose for it, which is Arabic.

We also saw that we cannot have a meaningful relationship with anybody for a prolonged period of time if we do not understand what they are saying to us.

Did Allah (swt) know that we are not Arabs and the language of His choosing is Arabic? Absolutely. The majority of the Muslims in today's world are not Arabs, by the way. Allah (swt) knew that from day one when He chose Arabic as His language; He knew that the majority of His servants will not be Arabs and yet He chose the Arabic language. The reason He chose the

Arabic language was because it is a very rich language and it has a lot of depth in the meanings of its words; more than in any other language. So He CHOSE that language.

Hence if we are to have any kind of relationship with Allah (swt), we need to have a relationship with the Qur'an and for that we need to understand and have some kind of working knowledge of the language of the Qur'an.

We need to make an effort to understand a little bit of what Allah(swt) is saying and then build it up from a little bit to a little bit more to a little bit more. This is really important because the Qur'an is really the word of Allah (swt) isn't it? He (swt) is speaking to us through the Qur'an, but how are we to understand what He is saying if we don't understand the language He is speaking in?

Slides 35-36:

We can read the translation of the Qur'an but please remember a translation of the Qur'an is not the Qur'an itself; the Qur'an is only in Arabic.

It is a good idea to have a copy of the Qur'an which has the translation with it; e.g. you can have English and Arabic or Urdu and Arabic together. Remember however, that a lot is lost in the translation; for example there are certain things in Urdu which are very difficult to translate in English.

If I say *choro na, choro* (leave it, just leave it); that is something which only Urdu speaking people can **actually** understand. It doesn't have the same meaning when it's translated in English. It's the same with the Qur'an.

I'll give you another example; we say *Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*. Generally how do you translate this? "I begin in the name of Allah" right? That's what the general meaning is, but if you look at the literal meaning, e.g. of *Bismi*, 'bi' is one word and 'ism' is another word. It means, "With the name of Allah", "With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Always Merciful". *Rahim's* root word is *rahm* which means "mercy". However, *Rahim* doesn't just mean merciful, it means "Always Merciful". Allah's (swt) mercy is something perpetual. He's always merciful to us; again and again. It's like we say about people that so and so is *rahm dil*. What does that mean? That he has mercy on people. However, Allah (swt) is *Rahman* and *Rahim*; He is always merciful. Over and over again. His mercy doesn't stop. That is *Rahim*.

An aunt of mine went for Hajj some years ago and when she came back she said that once in the *Masjid e Haram*, the *imam* was giving a *khutbah* in which he was reciting the Qur'an. My aunt was standing next to an Arab and that person was crying while listening to the *imam's tilawah* and she said that she wanted to cry because she didn't know why the person next to her was crying!

How will we ever build up a relationship with the book of Allah (swt) if we don't know whether to smile or be sad when we hear it being recited? It will just be mumbo jumbo to us.

There's no doubt that it **does** take immense effort to learn the translation of the Qur'an word to word, so we can start with little *surahs*; that's why I was suggesting that maybe we can start with the little *surahs* of the thirtieth *para* that we know by heart, because we read them so often in our *salah* and then when we hear it or read it then we would know exactly what they are saying rather than hearing or reading French or speaking Arabic, which is not our language.

Just imagine being in a room full of people, everybody talking in different languages and you're sitting there like a fool not knowing what's going on. You would feel very uncomfortable, wouldn't you?

That is one reason we Muslims have this almost uncomfortable relationship with the Qur'an; because we feel that we are obliged to read it because we are Muslims. We feel obliged because mom and *maulvi sahib* or *ustani jee* are after our lives to read it. *Alhamdulillah* that is a good thing; I am not saying that is a bad thing but you are just doing it out of obligation, not out of interest or love. And whatever you do only out of obligation wouldn't benefit you as much as it would if you were putting in a little bit of your heart in it as well.

Slide 37:

The word to word translation of the Qur'an is one thing and its explanation, which is called *tafseer* in Urdu, is another.

The explanation of the Qur'an tells you how each and every word of the Qur'an was revealed. The Qur'an was revealed to whom? To *RasulAllah* (pbuh). So there is special reference to context of each verse of each *surah* of why it was revealed. It's very interesting to know what happened and why it was revealed; in what phase of his (pbuh)'s life did *RasulAllah* (pbuh) receive that particular *surah*, and its meaning the way *RasulAllah* (pbuh) explained it to us.

That is the explanation of the Qur'an, which also hits you that "Oohh! That is what my *Rabb* is talking about!!" So one is word to word translation from which you understand the language and after that there's the explanation.

Slide 38:

What do you see on the screen right here?

Stand under.

A very important thing when we try to understand the Qur'an, stand under it. Stand under the guidance of Allah (swt) and *RasulAllah* (pbuh), do not try to understand it **outside** of the explanation that *RasulAllah* (pbuh) has given us.

Don't come up with your own explanation or interpretation. When we are trying to understand the word of Allah (swt), we should understand it the way He (swt) wants us to understand it and not the way **we want** to understand it.

I'll give you a simple example; these days, particularly the age that we are living in, this age of information and intellectual enlightenment so to speak, a lot of times people try to understand the Qur'an without taking the guidance from the *hadith* and the teachings of *RasulAllah* (pbuh).

I'm sure you guys have heard "Oh *Pardah!* That's not really in the Qur'an", "Oh! This and this command, that's not really in the Qur'an." or "This verse doesn't mean this, it means something else."

It's happening a lot these days, so stand under the Qur'an when you are trying to understand it. Do not stand above it.

The other way of building a relationship with the Qur'an is by listening. Do you remember how many ways of engaging with the Qur'an we talked about? By reading, understanding, listening and looking for its message rather than imposing our own understanding to it.

Slides 39 - 40:

Another way of engaging with the Qur'an in a meaningful way is by listening to it; get yourself used to listening to the *tilawah* of the Qur'an.

The nature of the Book is such that it is meant to be listened to.

Somebody said that the Qur'an is the collection of divine orations. It is the word of Allah (swt) and the best way to understand it is by listening.

However, we have so much noise and garbage in our heads listening to all sort of rubbish, that there is no room left for the Qur'an and so we find the Qur'an very dry; no music, no drumbeats, no chick chink chink or whatever, because we are all so used to all that noise and all that hoopla around us all the time, twenty-four seven, that a lot of times the Qur'an doesn't work for us. It just doesn't work for us. You find it very dry and you find it not that interesting to listen to.

Let's be honest here, isn't that the truth? Do you find that listening to the recitation of the Qur'an is a bit like, "Again?!"

The Qur'an says to decorate the Qur'an with our voices. The Qur'an is already beautiful and if somebody recites it in a beautiful voice then it sounds lovely.

You can find some beautiful recitation on YouTube. Start off by listening to a *surah* that is familiar to you; you have to give it quality time; even if it is five minutes, give it some quality time; sit in a quiet place where there's no TV blaring in the background and you're relaxed and then just close your eyes and concentrate on what you are listening to, even if you don't understand a single word. It will affect you somewhere in the heart.

Please do that. Go home and listen to it; just you and the Qur'an. Give it five minutes. Listen to a *surah* and then tell me what happens.

There are non-Muslims who listen to a beautiful recitation of the Qur'an and it affects them although they don't understand it.

Why do you think that is so? Why does listening have this kind of effect on us?

Because Allah (swt) has given us an aesthetic sense and the Qur'an is beautiful; especially when a *Qari* with a beautiful voice and style recites it.

There's also another reason; after we die our bodies will decompose and our souls will be all that will remain. Where is the soul from? It is from Heaven. Where is the Qur'an from? From Heaven. The Qur'an is food for our soul. Music is not food for our soul, the Qur'an is food for soul; because they are both from the same source.

Allah (swt) made our body out of clay, mud, so we will go into mud. That is where it is from. It goes in the mud. It decomposes. Have you ever been to a grave yard? What do you think happens to all those people who are buried there? They are decomposing but something about them is still alive. What is that? The soul. The soul is still there.

We pollute our soul with all these wrappings that we put on it; Satan tells us that music is food for our soul and we listen to garbage all the time. If you have a glass with dirty water in it and you put something very pure in it what will happen? Will the purity be retained? You have to clean the glass out first for the purity of whatever liquid you have to put in, even if it's a fizzy drink. That is the reason why we have to clean our polluted hearts in order to enable the Qur'an to be absorbed in it; and the soul yearns for that.

Listen attentively, and fall silent, whenever the Qur'an is being recited.

This is what the Qur'an itself commands:

'When the Qur'an is read, listen attentively, and fall silent, so that you may be blessed with mercy' (al-A'raf 7: 204).

Obviously when God is speaking you must fall silent, but the Arabic word used for 'listening' denotes not merely an act of 'physical hearing' but also a particular state of attention and acceptance.

Talking or speaking while the Qur'an is being read is a no no; playing qira'ah cassettes and then using it as 'background music' to do other things – again not a good idea at all; talking and whispering, while the Qur'an is being recited – nope.

So we've established that listening to it is another way of forming a relationship with the Qur'an. Allah (swt) says,

“When the Qur'an is read, listen attentively and fall silent so that you may be blessed with mercy.” [Surah Al A'raf 7: verse 204]

We have to train ourselves for that. What is the first thing that has to be done in order to listen attentively when the Qur'an is being recited? We have to stop talking with your mouth and stop talking to yourself within your mind.

Very often we are quiet externally but we are having an internal conversation with ourselves. When Allah (swt) says listen attentively that means zip up your mouth and zip up your internal mouth as well. There should be absolute quietness; then the possibility of the Qur'an affecting us will be higher, having some sort of relationship with the Qur'an will be more likely.

Slides 41 - 42:

Next is memorizing it. Memorize the Qur'an as much as possible because your position in Paradise is determined by the amount of Qur'an you memorized in this life.

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al Aas (ra) heard *RasulAllah* (saw) saying,

It will be said to the companion of the Qur'an, 'Read and elevate through the levels of Paradise and beautify your voice as you used to do when you were in the *dunia*'. So indeed your position in Paradise will be the last verse you recite."

Can you imagine that on the Day of Judgment Allah (swt) will say, "Recite; *Iqra*!" and whoever knows as much of the Qur'an will keep on ascending.

Are you all aware that Paradise has different levels? The highest level is *Firdous*.

Would you like to sell yourself short in this world? In school you would like an 'A*', wouldn't you? Or would you be happy with a 'C' that at least you passed; especially if your entry to the college of your choice depends on it? Would you be happy with that? Similarly, maximum memorization will admit you to the *Jannah* of your choice.

Memorize as much of the Qur'an as you can.

The Qur'an is unique in demanding to be preserved in memory, the *hifz*.

The word *hifz* itself, though now used in the limited sense of memorizing, includes both understanding and practice. In fact there is no English word which can accurately reflect its true and full meaning.

Hifz is an essential way of making the Qur'an penetrate you. It is not a mechanical, ritual act; it is an act of high spiritual and devotional importance.

Only through *hifz* can you read the Qur'an in Prayers and ponder over its meaning while you stand in the presence of the Speaker – Allah (swt).

But apart from that, it makes the Qur'an flow on your tongue, reside in your mind, dwell in your heart: it becomes your constant companion. Also as you memorize more you will find it easier to make your inner self participate in its reading and your mind study and understand its meaning.

The Prophet (pbuh) has stressed it in various ways:

One who has nothing of the Qur'an inside him is like a desolate/ruined house [Tirmidhi].

So allocate part of your time for the Qur'an for this purpose. Go about it in a systematic way. Set your targets over a period of time. All those parts should form part of your list, which the Prophet (pbuh) used to recite during Prayer, or at particular hours of the day and night, or which he instructed his Companions to so recite, or whose excellence he expounded. Some other portions will attract you automatically as you read the Qur'an regularly, and you should strive to retain them in your memory.

Slide 43:

Scholars say that the meaning of the hadith that you will climb the steps of Jannah means not just the Qur'an that you have memorized but the Qur'an that you have lived.

It's obvious that the more Qur'an that you know and are familiar with, the more Qur'an that you have internalized within yourself and the more Qur'an you have lived by your life, the more you will keep on climbing.

Of course as far as living the Qur'an is concerned, Just live it! You know how Nike says 'Just do it!'.

The Qur'an is not made of verses to read, it contains verses to do.

Each and every verse of the Qur'an has a specific meaning for us today, which is relevant for me and for you. We have to do something about it. We can't just sit there and say, "O what a great and wonderful translation." Or to think that we know the translation and that's it. No! That's not the reason why Allah (swt) sent us the Qur'an.

Remember in the last class we said that the Qur'an is a manual. If you bring a fridge/freezer in your house and you don't plug it in, you don't open the manual and you use it as a cupboard your whole life, it would be such a waste of such a useful piece of machinery. You will lose out on having cold water in the sizzling summer months or ice-cream! Your food would go bad sitting outside – and all because you couldn't be bothered to read the manual, understand what it said and follow the instructions in it. What a shame!

Isn't that what we do with the Qur'an – all Muslims homes have at least one copy, how many of us actually bother to read it, to understand it and to follow its instructions?

So one of the greatest ways by which we can have the connection with the Qur'an is by living it and of course for living the Qur'an we have to understand it, we have to recite it. We have to have this whole combination.

Slide 44:

So read, understand, submit to the message, memorize and act upon its commands. We need to make sure that we make a conscious effort at working on this relationship. It won't happen itself; you have to make an effort. And a consistent effort - daily. Not once in a while at your convenience or in Ramadan only.

Slides 45 - 54:

Food for thought...

What if we use the Qur'an like we use our cell phones?

What if we did that? What if we carried it around in our purses or our pockets all the time?

What if we went back for it if we forgot it at home?

And flipped through it several times a day?

What if we used it to receive messages from the text?

And we treated it like we couldn't live without it.

What if we gave it as gifts; has anybody given the Qur'an as a gift? Why don't you guys do that? Eid is coming and maybe you can get beautiful Qur'ans and give them to your friends as presents; they would be lovely presents.

What if we use the Qur'an in case of emergencies?

Slide 55:

It is free download. Allah (swt) has given us this whole manual, this whole bundle of mercy, this whole way of life - for free; it's just there. Take it.

Download it on your heart, in your lives.

Slide 56:

It is by chance that we met but by choice that we become friends.

You become friends with whomever in this life, even in this world, by choice. Nobody can force you to become friends with anybody. Sometimes your mother is desperate for you to be friends

with somebody she feels would be good for you – but you don't want to be friends with that person, so not much happens! Even if she plans to “set you up.” You can only be friends with people you **want** to be friends with.

That is what we need to do; we have to **CHOOSE** to be friends with the Qur'an; because if we choose to be friends with the Qur'an we choose to be friends with Allah (swt).

Slide 57:

So, you decide to become friends with the Qur'an – but find the commitment to read, trying to understand and learn, a bit over whelming. Then what?

Simple. Ask Allah (swt) for help! He can help you build this relationship – no one else can. Other people can help you with the *tajweed*, with the explanation etc. but the One to kindle the desire to have this relationship, to develop a love for it **is** The One who has sent it down to you – Allah (swt).

There are some specific Du'as you should try to learn:

O My Lord! Increase me in my knowledge (Ta Ha 20: 114).

Then there is this beautiful du'a of our Prophet (pbuh) – the contents are so comprehensive that we should ask Allah (swt) by using these words to make the Qur'an the spring of our hearts!

Allaahumma 'innee 'abduka, ibnu 'abdika, ibnu 'amatik, naasiyatee biyadik, maadhin fiyya hukmuk, 'adlun fiyya qadhaa'uk, 'as'aluka bikulli ismin huwa lak, sammayta bihi nafsak, 'aw 'anzaltahu fee kitaabik, 'aw 'allamtahu 'ahadan min khalqik, 'awista'tharta bihi fee 'ilmil-ghaybi 'indak, 'an taj'alal-Qur'aana rabee'a qalbee, wa noora sadree, wa jalaa'a huznee, wa thahaaba hamme wa ghamme .

O Allah, I am Your slave and the son of Your male slave and the son of your female slave. My forehead is in Your Hand (i.e. you have control over me). Your Judgment upon me is assured and Your Decree concerning me is just. I ask You by every Name that You have named Yourself with, revealed in Your Book, taught any one of Your creation or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You, to **make the Qur'an the spring of my heart, and the light of my chest, the banisher of my sadness and the reliever of my distress.**

[Ahmad]

(Du'a for end of a gathering) *SubhanaRabbikaRabbulIzzati 'ammayasifunwasalamun 'alalmursaleen, walhamdulillahiRabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *AssalamalaikumwarahmatullahiwaBarakatuh*

Reference for Teacher:

Way to the Qur'an by Khurram Murad. The Islamic Foundation. ISBN 0-86037-156-5