

MODULE 4

Class Title: Surah Al-Fatihah - Part 1: *Al-Hamd* (1st part of a 4 lesson series)

Aim of the lesson: To understand the message of the *surah*

Category: Scripture

Lesson Format: Power point presentation with discussion

(**Note to teacher:** some slides in the power point presentation are hidden, as they were not used for this session. They have not been deleted as you may want to use them for your class.)

(Greeting to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Ta'awwudh*) *A 'oodhu billahi min Ash Shaytaanir 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]

Slides 1-2:

Today we will start our detailed study of Surah Al-Fatihah. We will try and analyze this *surah* and relate it to our lives. *Insha Allah* this will help us improve our *salah*, and if we are able to do that it will be a big achievement for all of us.

Can someone come up and recite the *surah* for us? [Recitation of Surah Al-Fatihah]

Slide 3:

Surah Al-Fatihah is not an ordinary *surah*; why not? It is not an ordinary *surah* because Allah (swt) has made it compulsory for us to recite it in every prayer, every *rak'ah*. It's not as if you recite Surah Al-Fatihah once in *salah*, and your *salah* is done. You have to recite it in every *rak'ah*. Besides this, it is the first *surah* in the Qur'an. Allah (swt) has started this Holy Book with this *surah*.

So the two very basic reasons why this is not an ordinary *surah* are:

1. It is placed in the beginning of the Qur'an and
2. We are supposed to recite it in every *rak'ah* of the *salah*.

Slide 24:

You must have seen certain books that come with keys and I'm sure you must also have used them. Do any of you keep a secret diary? It's a kind of diary that has keys and nobody else can open and read it. That's the reason why it has locks (hence the keys).

So just like these books which have keys, the Qur'an also has a key. And that key is Surah Al-Fatihah. It's the opening *surah*. If we look at the design of the key and you look at the picture of these raised hands, they are quite similar. Surah Al-Fatihah is a *du'a*. It's a *du'a* that Allah (swt) has placed at the beginning of the Qur'an, and is the opening, the key to the Qur'an.

Slide 25:

What does Surah Al-Fatihah do? What are we asking Allah (swt) for, when we recite it? We are asking Him for guidance because we want to understand e.g., what it is that Allah (swt) wants us to do, what are the qualities He wants us to develop? We also want to know how to maintain a balanced life. What is *Siraat-al-Mustaqeem*? What is a balanced life, what are the do's and don'ts, we want to know what actions of ours will make Allah (swt) happy and also, what are the things He does not want us to do at all?

These are some of the points that are covered in this *du'a* that we ask Allah (swt) for; we need guidance in all these areas.

Slides 26-27:

Since Surah Al-Fatihah is actually a *du'a*, let's see what the prerequisites are for making a *du'a* or asking Allah (swt) for something. What are the essential things that you should have so that you can make a very good *du'a* to Allah (swt)? Can anybody guess?

1. First of all, you should be clear about what you are asking for. Surah Al-Fatihah is in Arabic and we're not Arabs, we don't know Arabic. So it's important to know the meaning of the *du'a*! Do we know what it means?

Slide 28-30:

2. Next, we must ask Allah (swt) from the depths of our heart, and this is very important. It is important to concentrate on what you're saying and try to **mean** what you are saying. If I was just narrating and not putting emphasis on certain words, I would not be communicating, I would just be reading. You would be able to tell.

Salah is communication between you and Allah (swt). When you are offering the *salah* and you say *Allahu Akbar*, you start communication with Allah (swt). When you recite Surah Al-Fatihah, you are talking to Allah (swt) and He is listening to whatever you are saying. You have His attention. He will keep on listening, as long as you keep on talking. Please remember that you have to **talk** to Allah (swt), you have to ask Him for what you want, like guidance through the words of Surah Al-Fatihah. Remember that as long as you are talking, He'll be listening; however when you get distracted, Allah (swt) will turn away.

3. The level of longing for what you want is very important. You see beggars on the streets, and if you give them some money, what do they say? They give all kinds of *du'as* to you. Some say, "May Allah take you to Mecca and Madinah." Do you go Mecca and Madinah after that? Others say, "May you have many children." Does your mother have kids after that? No. Why is that? It is because they don't mean what they are saying.
4. When you recite it with all your heart, Allah (swt) will *Insha Allah* give whatever you are asking for; in this case, guidance.

Slides 31-34:

What generally happens however, is that when we are offering *salah* and reciting Surah Al-Fatihah, we are thinking about other things – what’s going on in the other room, what programme will be on TV, etc. We’re not really thinking about the meaning and we’re not really asking – we’re just reading. There is a difference in asking and meaning it, and merely reciting it. Asking for something is possible when you really mean what you’re saying; and that is only possible when you know the meaning of what you’re saying. That is what we need to do.

When we don’t pay attention to what we are saying when we read Surah Al-Fatihah, it is an insult to Allah (swt) and that is something we don’t want to do. It’s just like calling your mother to your room and when she gets there, you don’t say anything to her. What will her reaction be? She’ll be very angry, right? So it’s just like that. You call Allah (swt) and then you don’t speak to Him.

Slides 35-37:

We can conclude that the pre-requisites of making a *du’a* are:

1. We should know what we are asking for, and in this case, we should know the meanings of the *ayaat* of Surah Al-Fatihah.
2. We should ask from the bottom of our hearts. We should not just keep asking it because it’s written in Surah Al-Fatihah, we should mean it.
3. Let Allah (swt) know that this is really something we want desperately.
4. We must realize that we’re asking Allah (swt) and He is listening and will answer us. This is also part of our faith, our *imaan*.

Slide 38:

There is a *Hadith-e-Qudsi* – *Hadith-e-Qudsi* are words of Allah (swt) that He has communicated directly to the Messenger (pbuh), but they are not a part of the Qur’an. Whenever the Prophet (pbuh) would narrate a *Hadith-e-Qudsi*, he’d say that Allah (swt) says this - and then he would say those words.

There’s a *Hadith-e-Qudsi* that tells us that when we stand in *salah* and we start reciting Surah Al-Fatihah, Allah (swt) answers us. So the best way to recite Surah Al-Fatihah in your *salah* is to read every *ayah* very slowly and give a short gap in between.

When you say *Alhamdulillah Rabbil ‘Aalameen*, wait, because then Allah (swt) will answer by saying, “My servant has praised Me.” He will be happy that His servant has acknowledged that He’s worthy of praise.

Then when we say *Ar-Rahmaanir Rahim*, Allah (swt) says, “My servant has extolled Me.” That he has determined who I am and he is praising Me to the best of his ability.

And when we say, *Maaliki Yaumid Deen*, then Allah (swt) says, “My servant has submitted to My Power.” Allah (swt) says that His servant has realized that He is the Master, He is the *Rabb* of everyone. He is the Master of the Day of Judgement. So His servant has realized this truth about Him.

When we say, *Iyyaka Na’abudu wa iyyaka nasta’een*, then Allah (swt) says, “This is between Me and My servant.” And when we recite the rest of the *surah*, then Allah (swt) says, “This is for My servant and My servant shall have what he has asked for.” [AnNasai, Muslim]

That’s a promise from Allah (swt) and He does not break His promises. Just imagine; if our Surah Al-Fatihah gets accepted by Allah (swt), we will have everything *Insha Allah*- because what we ask for in Surah Al-Fatihah, is just amazing, it’s the whole *deen* that we are asking for in this *du’a*.

Slide 39:

There is another *hadith* of the Prophet (saw), in which he says,

“He who does not recite Surah Al-Fatihah in the *salah*, has no *salah*.” [Bukhari, Muslim]

So it’s really important to recite Surah Al-Fatihah in your *salah*. If you don’t, it’s like you have not offered your *salah*.

Slide 40:

Now let’s look at the *ayaat*.

The first *ayah* of Surah Al-Fatihah is, *Bismillahir Rahmaanir Rahim*; and just like everything else, Allah (swt) is teaching us that no matter what you are starting, you must say *Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem*. You start your day with *Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem*. You should start whatever work you need to do, or your homework, or anything, with *Bismillah*. And whenever you are eating anything, you should start with the name of Allah.

Slides 41-44:

The second *ayah*; *Alhamdulillahil Rabbi ‘Aalameen* – today we are going to concentrate on the word ‘*Al-Hamd*’. We will see what it means and how to praise Allah (swt).

Al-Hamd means “All praise” to Allah (swt). Praising Allah (swt) should come from the bottom of our hearts. Sometimes we start saying it consciously and meaning it and then we lose concentration. We have to intentionally make an effort to concentrate on what we are saying. Praise for Allah can be in any language, but it has to be from the heart. However, there are some

masnoon words that the Prophet (saw) used to say, like *Subhan Allah*, *Alhamdulillah*, *Allahu Akbar*, *Masha Allah*, and so they have their own importance.

Slides 45-46:

There's a *hadith* about praising Allah (swt) which tells us that the phrase *Subhan Allah* fills the scale half, and when the servant of Allah says *Alhamdulillah*, the scales get full. Just these two phrases; if you say them, the scales of the Day of Judgement will be full. These two phrases are light on the lips but very heavy on the scales. Those two phrases are *SubhanAllahi wa bihamdihi*, *SubhanAllahil Azeem*. [Muslim]

Slides 47-55:

What is the purpose of our life? Worshipping Allah (swt) is the purpose of our lives and praising Him is a form of worship.

We need to praise Allah (swt) with our tongues and our hearts in whatever we do. Doing *shukr* is also a part of praising Allah (swt). Being grateful or doing *shukr* is a form of doing *hamd* or praising Allah (swt).

How do we do *shukr*? What comes to your mind when we say "How can you do *shukr*?" We can be grateful to Allah (swt) for our limbs, for example, by using them to thank Him; e.g. by doing *Sajdah*, helping somebody, etc. Whatever blessing Allah (swt) has given us, if we use it properly and for the right purpose, that is also doing *shukr* of Allah (swt).

We use our eyes to see the right things, the ears to hear the right things, and tongue to say the right things. That is doing *shukr*.

The reason why we need to do that is because on the Day of Judgement all these blessings that Allah (swt) has given us, will be talking. We will not be able to deny that we did anything because our eyes, our ears, our tongues, everything will be talking on their own and telling Allah (swt) how we used them. Our hands, our feet will all be talking and they will be telling Allah (swt) that this person did this, and this person did that. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"On the day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions." [Surah An-Nur 24: Verse 24]

Slides 56-64

Let's take a look at our *ne'mahs* or blessings; let's try and count them. Let's see how many other *ne'mahs* Allah (swt) has given us besides the basic ones like our eyes, ears, nose, and tongue; we get lots and lots of yummy things to eat *Alhamdulillah*, but if we look around, we can see people who don't. We also get lots of good cold beverages during summers. Lemonade, Tang,

RoohAfza, the *sharbat* that you make with almonds, etc. So you see, we have all kinds of juices and *sharbats*, whereas there are some people; in fact lots of people who can't even afford clean drinking water.

Then, we have access to luxury; comfortable washrooms in our houses, and we can go to hotels, we travel. But, unfortunately, there are certain people who have to think about the bare necessities.

Think about the cars that we use; we go around in big cars and we're independent, we don't have to go asking people to drop and pick us anywhere we need to go, but there are people who don't have that facility, who have to wait on bus stops, wait for rickshaw *walas* to come, and at times the rickshaw finally comes and the rickshaw *wala* doesn't want to go there, so they have to keep on waiting, until they find the rickshaw that does want to go to the area that they want to go to. All these are things that we take for granted; we don't even realize that these are blessings.

Slides 65-68:

Let's not forget the luxury of gadgets; we have all kinds of iPhones, mobiles, what-nots and we need to ask ourselves, what do I actually do for Allah (swt) to give me all these things; What did I do? What did any of us do for Allah (swt) to give us all these blessings? Anything could have been possible. We could have been on the other side of the fence and instead of going to the schools that you go to, you could have been sent to some *kutchi basti* (shanty town) school. Did anybody ever think that going to school was a blessing? We don't. That is what we need to realize that schools are also *ne'mahs*; because we get education and there are children on the street who are unable to get any kind of education.

Slides 69-74:

And then just the basic fact that you and I are able to see; just the use of our eyes is a big *ne'mah*; there are people who are unable to do that.

Slides 75-78:

Sometimes we complain about our homes to our parents, and say that we've had this theme for so many months, now we want a different theme. I had pink and blue and now I want green and yellow. We want to have a change in our lives, go for other things. We complain about things. But there are people who can't even complain. There is nobody to complain to, nobody to support them. What do they do? What should be their complaint? And when we get crystal clear water, we can drink this clear water *Alhamdulillah*, we can swim in it, but that facility is not available to everyone.

Slides 79-83:

Alhamdulillah, our parents are educated too; they work hard for us. They earn for us. But what if our parents were not educated? We'd have somebody else. We did not do anything to make us be born to our parents. We did not decide where we would be born. Allah (swt) did all of that; He

made our parents a big blessing, a *ne 'mah* for us. And He has made all of us happy. *Alhamdulillah*, we are happy because we have a lot to be grateful for. So how grateful should you and I be? We need to realize there's always something to be grateful for. No matter how bad a situation is, there is always something positive you can find and be grateful for.

Slides 84- 87:

There is an interesting concept while we are talking about *shukr*, which is a form of *hamd*; *shukr* and sugar are two words that sound alike, right?

Let's try and see what the similarities between sugar and *shukr* are; sugar has a sweet flavor - whenever you add it to something, it makes it sweet. E.g. if you have cut some melon and you feel that it's not so sweet, it doesn't taste that good, you sprinkle some sugar on it and then you eat it. It tastes fine *Alhamdulillah*, it makes it sweet. You enjoy eating it.

So sugar is something which adds sweetness to anything it is added to. That is the case with *shukr* as well; *shukr* is something that helps us to get through whatever situation we are facing. That is the function of *shukr*.

And sugar also makes unpleasant things pleasant. When you are going through some bad phase in your life, if you start thinking about your blessings - *ne 'mahs*, if you change your perspective, if you stop thinking about what is bothering you and start thinking about the blessings that you do have then you start feeling good about them and you become a *shaakir*; you become somebody who is doing *shukr*. And then your frame of mind will automatically change, you will not complain. And that is what the function of *shukr* is; it helps you through bad situations and it gives you energy.

Both of them, sugar and *shukr*, both give you the energy to go through life easily, *Insha Allah*.

Slides 87-91:

Let's look at the qualities of a *shaakir*; a person who does *shukr*. What are his qualities?

- He does not take his blessings for granted. That's the first quality he has. He knows that whatever Allah (swt) is giving him, is temporary and can be taken away, so he is always grateful for whatever he gets.
- He doesn't complain; he believes in removing the unpleasantness from life. He does not focus on what is bothering him, he would rather think about something positive. A *shaakir* always focuses on his blessings.
- He does things to please Allah (swt); he wants to make sure that he does things that Allah (swt) will be happy with. He wants to use his blessings to please Allah (swt).

Slides 92-96:

As opposed to a *shaakir*, the ungrateful person is always complaining, is always thinking about things he does not have. That is all he wants to talk about.

He pities himself, he's always thinking, 'Why me? Why does this happen to me?' We need to evaluate where we stand. An ungrateful person is never thankful to Allah (swt) because he does not see his blessings, he only focuses on the things he does not have, so he never feels thankful. Such a person is always jealous of others. He's more conscious of what that other person is getting and that he wants to have it himself. That's the psyche of a jealous person, of an ungrateful person.

He does not share his blessings with anybody. He doesn't care whether Allah (swt) is getting pleased or not.

Slides 97-103:

So if you think you have troubles, look at the people around.

If you think your pocket money is low, how about him? There are small children on the street asking for money. We should look at them.

If you don't think you have many friends, ask yourself if you have one sincere friend. Because we need to focus on our *ne'mahs*, our blessings; we need to focus on what we have.

You think studying is a burden? How about her, look at her, what is she doing? She's trying to write on a stone, because she does not have a proper paper and pencil.

And when you feel like giving up, think of this man, look at how he's traveling, how he's walking; he does not have any legs. *Alhamdulillah*, we have two legs.

And if you think you work hard, what about him? Look at the burden he's carrying.

If you complain about your transportation, about how you get stuck in traffic, think about these people, how they are commuting from one place to another. They are crossing a river on a bridge which is made of what? Thin planks and ropes. And there's a huge river underneath. So their mode of transportation is very dangerous. If they fall, it's a steep fall.

Slide 104:

We have seen why we should be grateful and have tried counting our uncountable blessings, but why would a poor person be grateful? How can we motivate them to feel *shukr* and be thankful to Allah (swt)?

There's a *hadith* in which the Prophet (saw) told us that the poor man will enter Paradise before the rich, by half a day. That is 500 years. [Tirmidhi]

You know that the Day of Judgement will be a very long day.

Can anybody guess why the poor will go to *Jannah* before the rich? Because they have less to answer for; we will all be accountable for our blessings, so the less we have, the less we'll be

accountable for. They don't have much; Allah (swt) will question them only about the little that they have. *Insha Allah* if we have *imaan* and do *sabr*, we will be able to enter *Jannah* before those richer than us.

Slides 105-106:

There's another *hadith* which tells us,

“He who does not thank people, does not thank Allah.” [Tirmidhi]

So we need to be grateful to the people around us as well, in order to be thankful to Allah (swt).

We will continue with the *surah* next week, *inshaAllah*.

(*Du'a* for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul 'Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salaamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'aalameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*