



Life With Allah

Connecting to The Creator

Ramadan Series: 1



Prepare for **Ramadan**



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Life With Allah

الحياة مع الله



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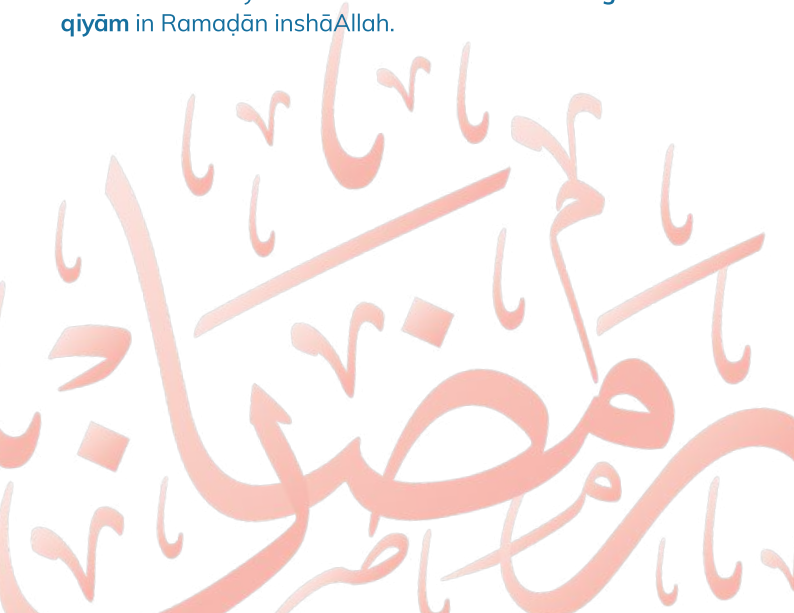
Sha‘ban: Preparation for Ramadan



Each year we are reminded that this Ramaḍān may be our final one. We also often remember those who were here last year but have passed on to Allah ﷻ since then.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life, Ramaḍān, by the will of Allah, is the lifeline we desperately need: patience through fasting, tranquillity through the night prayer, purification through repentance, comfort through du'ā' and contentment through dhikr.

For this Ramaḍān to be our best, **we should start preparing now, spiritually but also physically.** By preparing in Sha'bān, we are more likely to taste the **sweetness of fasting and qiyām** in Ramaḍān inshāAllah.



رمضان



“




The month of Rajab is the month for planting, the month of Sha‘bān is the month of irrigating crops, and the month of Ramadan is the month of harvesting the crops.”

(Abū Bakr al-Balkhī رحمه الله)


The following are some of the ways in which we can prepare for this momentous month:

1 Start fasting, especially if you have qada fasts

‘Ā’ishah  said: “I did not see him  fast in any month as much as he fasted in Sha‘bān.” (Muslim)


Usāmah b. Zayd  said to the Messenger of Allah , “**O Messenger of Allah, I do not see you fasting in any month as much as you fast in Sha‘bān.**” He  said, “That is a month which people do not pay much attention to, between Rajab and Ramaḍān. It is a month in which the actions are taken up to the Lord of the worlds, and I like that my deeds are taken up whilst I am fasting.” (Nasā’ī)

Just as performing the sunnah prayers before the farḍ prayers awakens the heart, prepares you to enter the farḍ prayers with greater khushū‘, and compensates for the deficiencies of the farḍ prayers, **fasting before Ramaḍān** prepares you for Ramaḍān physically and spiritually.


Ibn Rajab  wrote, “As Sha‘bān is a prelude to Ramaḍān, fasting and reciting Qur’ān has been prescribed in it just as it has been prescribed in Ramaḍān. This is so that you are prepared to enter Ramaḍān and **you train yourself to perform acts of obedience.**” By becoming accustomed to fasting in Sha‘bān, fasting in Ramaḍān will be easier. Similarly, experiencing the sweetness of fasting in Sha‘bān will help you to fast Ramaḍān with greater enthusiasm.

If you have any outstanding fasts from last Ramaḍān, use this month to make them up (qaḍā).

2 Increase in your recitation of the Qur'an

Ibn Rajab  wrote, “**The predecessors used to devote themselves to the recitation of the Qur'ān in Sha'bān**, and they would say ‘The month of Sha'bān is the month of the Reciters.’”


Set a realistic – yet slightly ambitious – target for recitation for this month to ensure you have a smoother entry into Ramaḍān. It may be increasing your recitation by 5 minutes or even an extra hour. Whether you increase the amount of time or the number of pages, either way **increase on what you usually do**.

🗨️ **When Sha'bān would begin, ‘Amr b. Qays  would close his shop and free himself for the recitation of the Qur'ān. “Glad tidings for the one who rectifies himself before Ramadan”. (Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif)**

3 Start praying at night

If waking up for tahajjud before Fajr is difficult, pray a minimum of 2 rak'ahs in addition to what you usually pray for 'Ishā' before you go to sleep.

4 Give charity

Our beloved Prophet  said, “Whoever provides ifṭār for a fasting person, he will have the same reward as him, without anything being diminished from the reward of the fasting person.” (Tirmidhī)

Give charity in Sha‘bān, **so that the poor can gain energy to fast Ramaḍān and perform qiyām**, as our predecessors used to do. An additional benefit is that if you donate ifṭār to the poor in other countries now, it is more likely to reach them at the beginning of Ramaḍān, allowing you to receive the reward of the full month.

5 Start reading/listening to something which will boost your iman

Slowly start weaning yourself off what snatches your time away from Allah (Netflix/social media etc) and **substitute it with what will remind you of Him**.

6 Clear your heart

As this is the month when your yearly actions are raised to Allah (subḥānahū wa ta‘ālā), cleanse your heart from hatred and grudges. Forgive people who have wronged you and start talking to people you haven’t talked to in a long time. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah looks down in the middle night of Sha‘bān and **He forgives all of His creation, except anyone who commits shirk or harbours hatred.**” (Ibn Mājah)

7 Hold yourself to account

Our actions are raised up **daily** to Allah twice: in the morning and the evening. Then, they are raised up **weekly** to Allah twice: on Monday and Thursday. They are then, raised up to Allah **yearly** in Sha‘bān. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ liked for his

'annual performance review' to correspond with him being in a state of fasting.

Use this month to **evaluate** your last year's actions. Do as much 'ibādah as you can, so that the angels will ascend to Allah with your good deeds.

8 Purify yourself before Ramadan by seeking forgiveness

Seek abundant forgiveness and turn to Allah in sincere repentance. Allah ﷻ says, "**So seek your Lord's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance.** Surely my Lord is Most Merciful, All-Loving." (11:90)

Purify your heart to welcome Ramaḍān in the best manner possible. Don't let your sins prevent you from tasting the sweetness of worship in Ramaḍān. Wuhayb b. Ward ؓ was asked, "Can the sinner taste the sweetness of worship?" He said, "**No, not even the one who considers doing the sin.**"

9 Take the following physical steps:

- Adjust your **sleeping routine** from now so that your body is adjusted by the time Ramaḍān begins.
- Buy your Eid outfits and gifts now. If you are going to purchase new items this year, then do it now (in Sha'bān) to **avoid wasting precious time in Ramaḍān.**
- Make a plan for simple and nutritious iftar meals to avoid wasting time in the blessed month.
- Plan how you are going to give your zakāh and ṣadaqah.

10 Draw up your Ramadan timetable

Plan a Ramaḍān timetable. See the next section for tips on how to devise a successful plan.

Revive A Neglected Sunnah

Our beloved Messenger ﷺ described Sha‘bān as, “**A month which people do not pay much attention to, between Rajab and Ramaḍān**” (Nasā’ī).

This indicates that many people are heedless of this time, and it is **especially virtuous to worship and remember Allah in places and times of heedlessness**, e.g. the markets. It also helps us to perform deeds in secret, as others are heedless, and thereby giving us a chance to increase in our sincerity (ikhlāṣ).


Whilst we will all be fasting in Ramaḍān inshāAllāh, this is our chance to fast in secret.

May Allah allow us to revive the sunnah of increasing our worship in this month, and allow us to reach Ramaḍān.



The (pious predecessors) used to make du‘ā’ for six months prior to Ramaḍān, asking Allāh to allow them to witness Ramaḍān.”

(Laṭā’if al-Ma‘ārif)



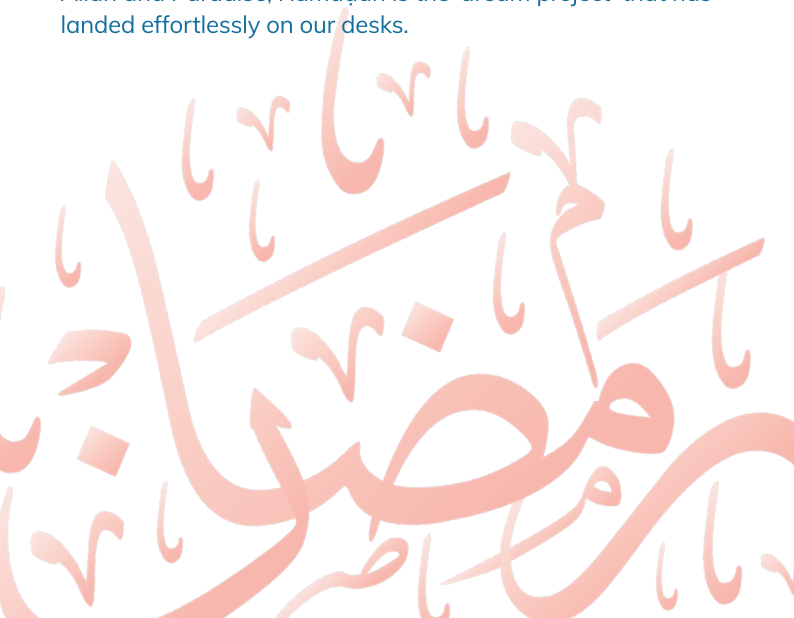
Plan Ramadan

Part 1:

Goals & Actions

When we have to undertake a project, we invest a great deal of effort and time into ensuring the project will be successful. Projects are initiated, then planned out, then executed and monitored. And once they are completed, they are evaluated.

If we can do this for projects at work, then surely the 'project' of Ramaḍān is far greater. As people seeking the pleasure of Allah and Paradise, Ramaḍān is the 'dream project' that has landed effortlessly on our desks.



The Goals of Ramadan

In order to prepare a plan which will help us to successfully complete this project, we have to be clear about its goals. These goals will provide the framework of a successful Ramaḍān. Everything we do in Ramaḍān should lead to the following goals:

1 Forgiveness for sins

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever observes the fasts of Ramaḍān with firm belief and hoping for reward, all of his previous sins will be forgiven” (Bukhārī).

2 Freedom from Hell

Deeply shudder at the possibility of being from the people of the Hell-fire; and then beg Allah to release you from the Hell-fire. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, Allah frees slaves from the Hell-fire every night.” (Tirmidhī)

3 Submitting to Allah

In our everyday lives, we are accustomed to giving in to our desires. If we feel like eating, we eat. If we feel like drinking, we drink. Through Ramaḍān, we should aim to train the nafs (inner self) to submit itself to Allah, and to comply with His commands.

4 Elevating the soul from its base desires (stomach and private parts)

Aim for your fasting and Ramaḍān to remove the love of the world from your heart; and let your soul soar high above the ground, away from the body, and upwards towards its Creator and Originator.

5 Mercy

This Ramaḍān aim to be the recipient of Allah's mercy and loving care.

6 Developing good character

Excellent character is an integral part of our dīn, and there is no better time to cultivate this than in Ramaḍān. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said, "When one of you wakes up fasting, he should neither use obscene language nor act ignorantly. If anyone insults him or argues with him, he should say: 'I am fasting, I am fasting'" (Muslim).

7 Consistency

Ramaḍān is a bootcamp and a training programme to cultivate your heart, soul, morals and ultimately your life, so that the obedience of Allah becomes your lifestyle.

Maximise Ramadan: What Should You Include In Your Schedule?

To make the most of the blessed month of Ramaḍān, have a plan. Write down your daily schedule for Ramaḍān. Be happy and feel the excitement in your heart knowing that you will be spending quality time with Allah ﷻ.

Depending on your circumstances, your schedule on weekdays may differ from the weekends. Aim to remain busy with good deeds, as having free time makes it easier to sin.

What to include in your timetable:

1 Salāh

- **The 5 daily prayers**, including the sunnah prayers. Be punctual with praying in congregation and aim to be there before the opening takbīr.
- **Qiyām al-Layl** (Tarāwīḥ/Tahajjud). Along with fasting, this is the highlight of Ramaḍān. This is the time of the year in which you can truly connect with the Qur’ān. Recite slowly, repeat the āyāt and feel the emotion in your heart. Think that Allah is talking to YOU directly.
- **Salāh al-Ḍuḥā**. This can be read approximately 15 minutes after sunrise till 15 minutes before Ḍuḥr. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Whoever offers Fajr in congregation and

remains seated, engaging in the remembrance of Allah until the sun has risen, and then offers two rak'ahs, he will have a **reward equal to that of performing Hajj and 'Umrah.**" He ﷺ said: "Complete, complete, complete (i.e. complete reward)." (Tirmidhī)

2 Qur'ān

- Have an ambitious target for **reciting** as much Qur'ān as possible.
- Along with recitation, allocate time for memorising, reviewing memorisation, **learning the meanings** and **reflecting** on the Qur'ān.
- Bring the Qur'ān alive into your day. Have a minimum of at least one thing you will act upon based on what you recited in the day. (For an excellent Arabic resource on this, click [here](#))

3 Dhikr

- Morning and evening adhkār
- Adhkār after ṣalāh
- Adhkār of sleep
- General dhikr throughout the day

Spend time in acquainting yourself with the meanings of the adhkār (remembrances), so that your dhikr is conscious. Similarly, combine dhikr with deep reflection (tafakkur).

4 Du‘ā’

- Du‘ā’ **before iftār** (and after opening the fast)
- Du‘ā’ throughout the day when you’re fasting
- Du‘ā’ in your **sajdah**
- Du‘ā’ in the **last third of the night**, especially in **sajdah**
- **Sunnah du‘ās**, such as before/after eating, entering/leaving the house, using the bathroom etc. Some of these have incredible rewards, which you shouldn’t miss out on, especially in this blessed month.
- Increase your **praise (ḥamd) of Allah** at the start of your du‘ā’. This will specifically help you to build a special bond with Him.

5 Helping others & family ties

- Try to help others as much as possible, especially the elderly and the **vulnerable people** in your community.
- Maintain **family ties** and reach out to people you may have cut off contact with.
- Choose **specific acts of kindness** which you will do for your family e.g. unload the dishwasher/give a head massage/help with homework.
- Give **charity**. Try to feed those who are fasting to acquire the reward of their fasts inshallah.

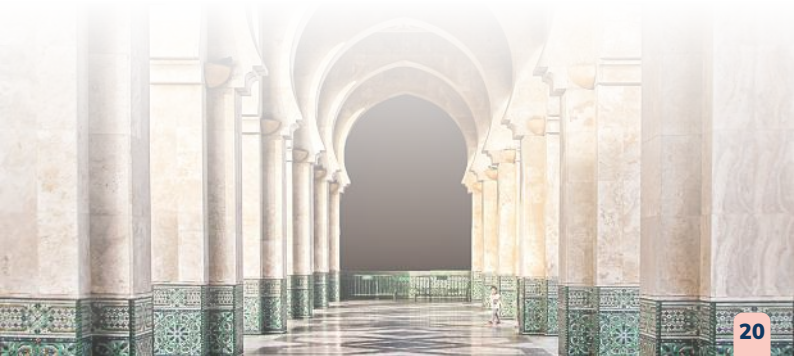
The Last 10 Days

In the last ten days, **intensify your worship schedule**, take off time from work (if possible) and use it to focus your connection with Allah ﷻ.

Your Family

If you are a mother or father, don't be selfish. **Be considerate and give your spouse their own 'alone with Allah' time** whilst you take care of the children. Your spouse connecting with Allah will result in him/her being a better spouse and parent to your children.

Spend quality time with your children. Tell them the stories of the Prophets, Companions and the people of the past. Recite Qur'ān with them. Hold a daily family circle where you can have discussions. Do fun and beneficial activities related to Ramaḍān. (There are many ideas on the internet for various crafts and activities.) **Remember to renew your intention for spending quality time with them**, and you will be rewarded for this great act of 'ibādah (worship) inshāAllah.





By Allah, if it was said to the people of the grave, 'make a wish!' they would wish for one day of Ramaḍān."

(Ibn al-Jawzī رحمته الله)

Use Every Moment

There may be times when you are tired or too exhausted to recite Qur'ān. Fill this time up with 'easier' acts of worship e.g. listening to the Qur'ān or a beneficial lecture. Similarly, if you're doing household chores or commuting, recite the Qur'ān or do dhikr at the same time.

Have a stockpile of books, or even one book, ready to help you become close to Allah ﷻ, His Words and His Messenger ﷺ.

May Allah ﷻ grant us the joy of worshipping Him in this life, and the joy of seeing Him in the next.



Plan Ramadan

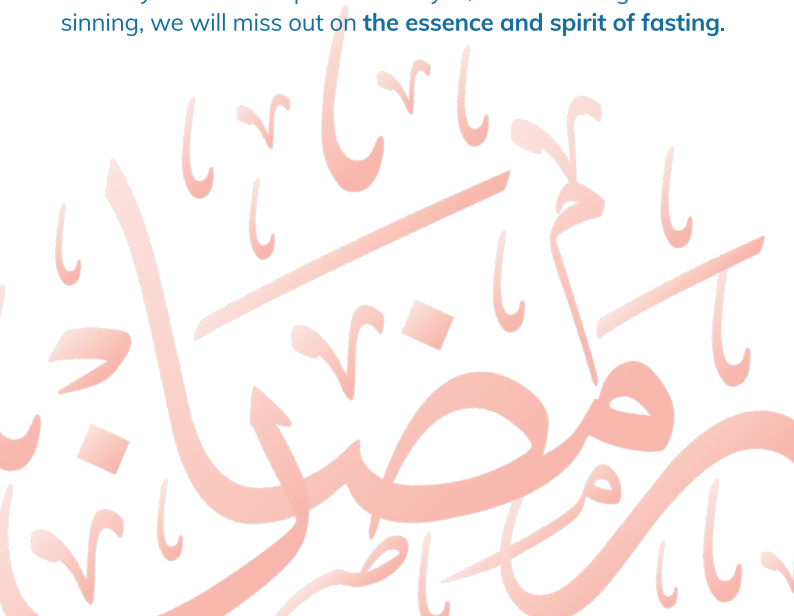
Part 2:

Time to Detox



Ramaḍān is a month in which we seek to **train the nafs (inner self) to resist obeying its desires**, and instead obey Allah ﷻ. Therefore, it is essential, that along with planning what we are going to do in Ramaḍān, we should also plan what we are **not** going to do. Ramaḍān is a time to detox our bodies, and more importantly our hearts from the toxins of ‘sins’ and the ‘diseases’ of the heart.

If we fast – by not eating, drinking and abstaining from intimacy – but do not protect our eyes, ears and tongues from sinning, we will miss out on **the essence and spirit of fasting**.



The following are some of the key aspects we should focus on:

1 Eating

Food is the fuel of desires. The more we fill our stomachs, the lazier we feel to perform 'ibādah. If we eat a lot, we drink a lot. And this makes us sleep a lot, which leads to us losing out on precious time. The Prophet ﷺ ordered the unmarried companions to fast, because fasting is meant to curtail and restrain sexual desire.

Likewise, we have to internalise that **Ramaḍān is about fasting, not feasting**. We shouldn't spend too much time preparing our meals. Naturally the long hours leave us hungry, making us want to cook more than usual. Similarly, we should not pressurise our family members to cook elaborate meals for us.

Imām al-Ghazālī رحمه الله explained that **one will only reap the full benefit of a fast if one does not over eat at ifṭār**. We should only eat what one would usually eat on a normal night. Otherwise, the purpose of fasting will not be fulfilled and it will be easier for Shayṭān to make inroads into our hearts.

2 Talking

Ramaḍān is the best time to rectify our speech. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent" (Bukhārī). This includes how we talk to others through our phones and on social media.

3 Sleeping

Ramaḍān is the best time to reduce sleep, and spend a greater portion of the night in worshipping Allah.

4 Gazing at ḥarām

Gazing at ḥarām destroys the firmness and determination of the heart. It is a poison which leads to the darkness of the heart, just as its opposite (lowering the gaze) leads to the heart being illuminated. It is a poison which stops us from tasting the sweetness of imān and worshipping Allah. Along with lowering our gazes from anything which incites lust, we should also avoid looking at the glitz and glamour of the world, as this makes us heedless and forgetful of Allah ﷻ.

5 Severing ties of kinship

Ramaḍān is the time to cleanse our hearts, battle the pride and jealousy of our hearts, and reach out to those we have cut off ties with. It is the perfect opportunity to forgive those who have wronged us, to ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged, and to ask Allah to unite our hearts. If we seek to connect with Allah, we have to connect with our relatives. But if we cut them off, Allah will cut us off.

The most deserving of our good relations are our parents. We should serve and be kind to our parents to the best of our abilities.

6 Socialising and social media

Too much socialising hardens the heart, and often leads to sinning. Ramaḍān, especially i'tikāf of the last 10 days is the perfect retreat: away from people, and **fully focused on Allah**.

Social media is the biggest thief of our time. In Ramaḍān, every moment is precious, **therefore try to detox from social media completely**. Otherwise, reduce it to a minimum. At the most, have a set 'window' in which you allow yourself to catch up on it, rather than just saying 'I'm going to reduce it.' For example, 'I will use social media for twenty minutes after iṭṭār.'

Think of Ramaḍān as a battlefield. The enemy you are trying to defeat is your nafs. It is an **enemy which has conquered you** many times over in the past. This Ramaḍān, however, you are determined that by the help of Allah, **you are going to conquer it**. You are going to be the winner, and not the loser. This will require planning, effort, tonnes of du'ā' and perhaps even a change in strategy.

One such strategy is to manoeuvre around your nafs, and subtly trick it. When you are struggling to keep momentum, say to yourself: just a little while longer. After Ramaḍān, you can go back to enjoying the ḥalāl pleasures. For now, just keep going for a little while longer. Once, Bishr al-Ḥāfiؒ was walking with one of his companions towards a city. His companion wanted to drink water from a well. Bishr said to him, "We will drink from the next well that appears on the way." Every time they would approach a well, Bishr would say, "From the next well." When they finally reached their destination, Bishr said, "This is how we journey through the world."

How to Connect to the Qur'an this Ramadan



It has been said that whilst the primary purpose of fasting is to gain taqwā, the purpose of Ramaḍān is to connect with the Qur'ān. Indeed, Ramaḍān is the month of the Qur'ān. We know from the authentic Sunnah that every Ramaḍān, in the best month of the year, the best of mankind, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would revise the Qur'ān, the best of words, with the best of angels, Jibrīl عليه السلام.

Here are 10 practical ways you can connect to the Qur'ān in this blessed month:

1 Recite as much Qur'ān as you can

Try to complete at least one khatmah/khatam of the Qur'ān. However, if you managed to complete one last year, aim to increase your khatmah by one and complete two this year. This may seem ambitious, but make du'ā' to Allah ﷻ to help you accomplish this as du'ā' makes the impossible possible. The charts [here](#) are an excellent guide to help you to plan your daily recitation in order to achieve your goals.

2 Read the tafsīr of a chosen sūrah

Pick a sūrah or a collection of sūrahs, and then read or listen to the tafsīr (explanation) of these sūrahs. Focus on them in this month. English translations of tafsīr works, some of which are available online include: Tafsīr al-Jalālayn, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, In the Shade of the Qur'ān, and Tafsīr al-Sa'dī.

3 Ponder and reflect on the Qur'ān (tadabbur)

Recitation of the Qur'ān is not enough. Allah ﷻ tells us: “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)

Reflecting upon the Qur'ān entails thinking over the meaning and the purpose behind an āyah: what is Allah ﷻ asking me

to do here? Deep thinking and reflection allow us to develop a deeper connection with the Qur'ān and will catalyse us to **act** upon the Qur'ān inshā'Allah.

Suggestion: Qur'ān Journaling (i.e. jotting down thoughts and reflections) may be a useful means for staying consistent with tadabbur.

4 Listen to the Qur'ān

Although there is more reward in reciting the Qur'ān, listen to it when you are not able to recite it. The benefits of listening to the Qur'ān are (though not limited to): improving your tajwīd, aiding your memorisation and providing you with the chance to absorb the beauty of the Qur'ān. Here are a collection of [long](#) and [short](#) recitation clips which you may listen to.

Suggestion: download your favourite clips to avoid the inescapable YouTube adverts or alternatively, use an ad-free Qur'ān app.

5 Choose a story from the Qur'ān and share it with your families and friends

The Qur'ān is full of stories which are filled with deep wisdom. Choose a story from the Qur'ān which inspires you and share this story with your families, friends and children. From the talking ant to the golden cow; from the baby which spoke to the snake which turned into a stick; make the Qur'ān a part of your families' lives.

6 Select 30 du'ās from the Qur'ān and focus on one each day

Select one Qur'ānic du'ā' for each day of the month and repeat this du'ā' throughout the entire day. Choose as many moments as possible from the [special times in which du'ā' is accepted](#) to make this du'ā'.

Suggestion: reflect on the background of each du'ā' and learn the translation of the du'ā'.

7 Memorise as much as you can

Fix an amount to memorise every day. Even if you do two lines a day, with consistency you will have memorised 60 lines by the end of the month inshā'Allāh.

Just imagine that you are in the hereafter and you are being told: "Read, ascend, and recite slowly and distinctly as you used to recite in the world..." (Abū Dāwūd) and depending on how much you've memorised, that is where you will have to stop. The more you've memorised, the higher you will be able to go. Aim high this Ramaḍān!

8 Interact with what you recite

In your night prayers, interact with the āyāt you are reciting like the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did. When you come across an ayah of mercy, stop and supplicate to Allah. When you come across an āyah of punishment, stop and ask for Allah's protection.

9 Vary what you read in Ṣalāh

Rather than sticking to what you always read, try to vary between the different sūrahs you have memorized. This will help you to perform Ṣalāh with more khushū' (humility and concentration) and you will start to feel the sweetness of Ṣalāh.

10 Implement the Qur'ān in your life

Allah ﷻ has described specific qualities that we should embody as believers: these are the People of the Qur'ān. To help you become such people of the Qur'ān, who are the chosen people of Allah, [here](#) is a selected list of Qur'ānic qualities.

- a) Select one of the qualities from the list and make it your focus for this month.
- b) Reflect on the related āyāt (which are in the [pdf](#) document).
- c) Work on developing the quality consistently throughout Ramaḍān, so that it becomes a part of you and lives on in you beyond Ramaḍān.

Suggestion: write down this quality on a piece of paper and stick it on your fridge or somewhere where you are likely to see it every day to remind yourself.

May Allāh make us from the People of the Qur'ān.

وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا
مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

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