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RAMADAN CHALLENGE

Recap

**8 Days of challenges, amazing speakers, and
insightful topics to help you reset for Ramadan**

Ramadan Prep: Engaging With The Qur'an

With Sh. Furhan Zubairi

Our relationship with the Qur'an cannot be superficial. It cannot just be at the surface level. It can't be something that we simply recite for the sake of blessings.

The Qur'an has to play a central role in our daily lives. And the primary objective, the primary purpose behind revelation is for us to engage with the Quran intellectually, spiritually and emotionally; it's to actually sink, ponder, and reflect upon its verses. The Qur'an is first and foremost a book of guidance for all of mankind, for all of humanity, regardless of their ethnicity, their nationality, their race, their color, their language, even their religion. It doesn't matter.

Whoever approaches the Koran with an open heart with an open mind is going to find some sort of guidance. But those who benefit most from the guidance of the Qur'an are those who have Taqwa, those who are conscious, mindful and aware of Allah.

The Prophet Muhamad (SAW) said the best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it. The reason that those who learn the Qur'an and teach it are considered to be the best of people is because the Koran is supposed to transform who we are internally and externally. If we're really learning the Qur'an correctly and properly, it should be transforming who we are in terms of our beliefs, morals, behavior, and character.



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Ramadan Prep: Du'aas From The Qur'an

With Dr. Haifaa Younis

When My servants ask you [O Prophet] about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one's prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond [with obedience] to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided [to the Right Way]. [Qur'an 2:186]

Asking Allah in supplication is absolutely an integral part of the month of Ramadan. It's not only about fasting, or reading Quran, or praying Taraweeh or all of the above. What we must not forget is du'a, asking Allah.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) taught us that one of the conditions where this du'a will be granted is fasting. As long as a person is fasting, until they break their fast, their supplication will be granted.

It is so easy to make Du'a. But how frequently do we make du'a? Do we remember to make du'a when everything is fine and things are going my way? Or do we only remember to make du'a things aren't going well, when we're in trouble, when we are in need, when we are sick, when we have an interview, when we are applying to college or to a job? Is that when we sit down and raise our hands and beg Allah? That shouldn't be the case.

When I make Du'a, when I remember Allah in time of prosperity, I'm being grateful. I am grateful to Allah because I remembered Him in a time when many people don't remember. And the more grateful I am, the more Allah will give me. That's a well known cause and effect verse in the Quran, if you are grateful, I'll give you more.



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Ramadan Prep: Mindful of Mental Health in Ramadan

With Dr. Aneesah Nadir

To have a mentally healthy Ramadan, it's really important to stop and take some deep breaths. So many of us are just roaming and going like very, very quickly from one moment to the next. And many of us are actually overwhelmed by all that we are dealing with in life and in our families. And so because of that, sometimes and oftentimes we're not as aware of and present with ourselves. And also it doesn't give us the opportunity to be present with Allah, because as we go into Ramadan, that's one of the key tasks is to re-establish our relationship with Allah. And in order to be able to re-establish our relationship with Allah, we have to gain some calm and just take a moment to be present.

Being focused, being present and developing a sense of peacefulness within yourself is important because when we have that, then we can go to Allah in a better state. All of us go through things and quite frankly, it doesn't necessarily stop when Ramadan starts. But one of the things that is going to be important is to remember that even in the midst of the difficulties and the adversities that we experience, Allah provides ease.

We have to look for it. Sometimes we may not be as readily aware of that ease. That's why it's important to have a gratefulness journal; a journal in which we can remind ourselves of the blessings that Allah has given us. Just take a moment to write down one thing that we're grateful for, one of the favors of Allah, whether it's the air we breathe, the food we eat, the opportunity to see our family, to the opportunity to smile in the midst of the challenges, the opportunity for sunlight, rain, whatever it is. Islam is a religion of hope and hopefulness. So stay hopeful and to remind each other to be hopeful.



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Ramadan Prep: Excelling in Ramadan

With Sh. Yaser Birjas

You need to have a hunger for success, hunger for accomplishment, hunger for triumph. You overcome your whims, your desires, your procrastination and the physical hunger in Ramadan to reach success because you have that burning desire to do so. Set goals and set them very, very high. You can't just go through Ramadan and end without a plan. If you don't plan for Ramadan, you're planning to fail in the month of Ramadan.

Be confident that you can accomplish your goals. You need to have that sense of capability and ability that you will be able to succeed insha'Allah. Be realistic about your goals and what you're setting off to accomplish. The Prophet (SAW) said the best deeds are the ones that are consistent even if they are small, so focus on quality. Get inspired by studying the successful ones. How can you get motivated and inspired? Read the stories of the people from the past.

Surround yourself with good company. If you are around those who are striving to do more during Ramadan, you will be encouraged to do more as well. Find good companionship because good habits are contagious. Be adaptable. Change happens. It doesn't matter how perfect your Ramadan schedule looks on paper, life happens and circumstances change. Be flexible to adapt to the change and still succeed. And through all of this, don't ever give up.



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Ramadan Prep: Balancing Life & Ramadan

With Sh. Mikaeel Smith

We can look at the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) life and see that he prioritized structure. He gave everything, from his ibadah to his family to himself, its designated time. He attempted to manage his time and take advantage of time. Managing time is something that has been overemphasized by the scholars of Islam. In Ramadan, we focus on increasing our ibaadah but many times, people sideline their daily responsibilities to do so. This can bring around feelings of resentment because we feel like we're falling behind in our iaadah due to responsibilities, whether it be work, family, children or illnesses. But remember that you are always where you are supposed to be.

Instead of sidelining responsibilities, focus on ihsaan. Ihsaan so has many different meanings but one of the best ways to understand it is perfection. You do an action as if Allah is watching you. Whenever you're doing a job and your boss is there, you act on a whole different caliber. Apply that same Ihsaan on your daily responsibilities.

Reassess your intentions, become conscious of your actions and apply Taqwa. If you do complete your responsibilities with the right intention, with presence of mind, and for the sake of Allah, it becomes very rewarding.

Ramadan is a month of Taqwa and it allows us to reprioritize our lives. Balance comes with assessing what is important in our lives and what is not. It's like a reset button and you can spend your month, and your life, on what's important and fulfilling.



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Ramadan Prep: Fueling the Body and Soul

With Abdul-Kareem Al-Selwady and Zainab Ismail

To have a successful Ramadan, the first thing you have to do is have some kind of plan on how you're going to approach your month. Strategize how you are going to approach the month, allotting time for yourself and really not putting too much pressure on yourself. Be sure to give your body its rights because if you don't give your body its right, you won't really be able to be productive.

And then that leads us to what you're eating. In Ramadan, having very healthy, hydrating, nourishing, nutrient-dense suhoor is critical for your energy for the day. And then at the night for your Iftar, don't overload your body. Try your best to think of the 80/20 rule: 80% of what you eat is what's going to nourish and help your body and then the other 20% is eating what you enjoy. Should I shall help you have a successful Ramadan.

Hydration is also super important, not just in Ramadan, but all the time. Ahe game changer is what's called the Prophetic drink. It's basically soaked dates overnight, and you drink that water in the morning. And then you would also either eat the dates or have them in a smoothie of some kind so that you're really getting all of the nutrients. The water is very high alkaline, and it's very hydrating.

For a person that's struggling to stay on top of their hydration, plain water might not be the best way to hydrate. There's so many things that depending where the water is coming from, it might not have nutrients. Your body is looking for nutrients. It needs a combination of basically some sodium and some sugar for it to absorb in the cells. So eating things watermelon, celery juice, cucumber, cantaloupe, zucchini, grapes, or just by adding pink Himalayan salt into water are great ways to help stay hydrated.



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Ramadan Prep: Elevating Our Salah

With Dr. Yasir Qadhi

Successful indeed are the believers: those who humble themselves in prayer. [Qur'an 23:1-2]

According to ibn Taymiyyah, Salah is the greatest act of worship. Even before any other legislation was done, the Salah was legislated and Angel Jibril came down himself to legislate the Salah and to teach the Prophet (SAW).

Allah says in the Qur'an that the believers are successful. Who are the believers? Those that have attained Khushoo' in their Salah, those that have attained tranquility and peace in their Salah. That is the number one characteristic of the Salah. Allah didn't say those that pray regularly. No, He said those who enjoy the tranquility, those who are able to experience the pleasure of the Salah. Those are the ones who are the believers. Our goal should be that the Salah becomes our source of serenity and peace. Our goal should be that the Salah itself becomes an incentive for us to pray.

So how do we increase Khushoo'? First and foremost, it's to have a knowledge of the one whom we are worshipping. And this knowledge permeates throughout our entire existence. It is going to affect every facet of our lives. Once we understand who Allah is, and we study His names and attributes, and we study His blessings on us and the effects of His rahmah on the creation, everything is going to change. Everything begins with Eman. Everything begins with what is in the heart.

We also need to increase our knowledge about Salah. Knowledge always consists of two primary factors: number one is the blessing side, and number two is the legal side, or fiqh. Understanding the blessings of Salah will help motivate us to pray. Understanding the fiqh will help you get an understanding of why you're doing what you're doing. And when you have when you have an intricate knowledge of something, automatically your appreciation of it grows.



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Ramadan Prep: Let the Hearts Submit

With Dr. Omar Suleiman

The heart is the beginning and the end of everything that we do because the intention is the beginning and end of everything that we do. And so it's important for us to go back to our heart and to think about what submission of the heart looks like. Allah has said that all of the deeds of the child of Adam are for him except for fasting. Fasting is for me, and I reward accordingly.

That's because fasting is the deed of sincerity. Allah sees us at all times. We could secretly break away and break our fast, but we maintain our fast because Allah is watching us, and that's what makes it the ultimate act of sincerity. That's what makes it the ultimate act of Taqwa, of God consciousness and piety.

So what goes into having a pure heart? The first part of this is to submit your heart to the revelation. It is a heart that is free of disbelief, a heart that is free of a heart that is free of hesitation, of discomfort with what Allah has revealed. It knows that what Allah has revealed is true and that is the standard that it must submit to. It's not going to try to change it or adjust it. The very beginning is the acknowledgement of Allah's perfection and your imperfection. And then it's the journey of climbing through your imperfections to reach the standard of perfection, knowing that you will die trying because no one of us will ever reach perfection. It's continually seeking the mercy of Allah, the forgiveness of Allah, and continuing to push yourself to do better to meet the standard.

The second part of this is submitting your heart by removing from it any ill will or hatred towards the creation of Allah. Your heart cannot be at peace or in submission to Allah if it carries ill-will, envy, hatred, pride or arrogance.

And the third part of this is submitting your heart to Allah completely. You do not condition your love of Allah with something of this dunya. So removing any conditions from your heart for your love. Allah, I love you. I love you no matter what. And Ramadan allows us to really put our priorities in place. And when we have our priorities in place and we put the pleasure of Allah above all other things, then our hearts submit to that. Our hearts are in connection to Allah and nothing of this world can sever the connection of that heart to Allah.



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