

Prophetic Method of Qur'anic Education

Why the Book of Allah is Not Transforming Our Hearts



Introduction

We live in a day and age where information about Islam has never been more easily accessible. We can retrieve an endless stream of Islamic content just through our smartphones, skim through the Qur'an by searching keywords, and read various translations and explanations (*tafasīr*) thereof online. Yet, many of those whose information about the Qur'an increases still express a set of seemingly paradoxical questions: "Why am I not feeling a rise in my faith through the Qur'an? Why does my learning of the Qur'an not make the religion easier for me to practice? How come I am not experiencing the transformative effect of the Qur'an which I read about in the stories of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ?"

This contrast becomes even more striking when compared to the early years of Islam. When Muhammad's ﷺ prophethood began, he spent three years secretly calling people to the Qur'anic revelation before even proclaiming its message to the public, which in turn led to Muslims facing a severe wave of torture, death, and persecution. And yet, no early Muslim was ever reported to have abandoned the faith because of that. Quite on the contrary, we can observe a pattern of steadfastness in their religion and an astonishing willingness to sacrifice for it, which they had only learned about for a couple of years, if not even less.

So the question is: How come the Qur'an had an effect much stronger on their faith and souls than on ours? The Qur'an itself gives a hint when Allah addresses the exact same companions directly: **"So if they believe in the same as you believe in, then they have been [rightly] guided"**¹. This verse suggests that the early Muslims' approach to believing in the revelation was fundamentally sound, prompting us to examine what made their method so effective.

Allah, Exalted is He, states in His book when addressing His Prophet ﷺ: "And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur'ān] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them"². This verse indicates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was not only obliged to read out the Qur'an to the people, but he was also required to clarify and explain it to them.

With this understanding in mind, I want to take you on a brief journey to examine some fundamental characteristics of the Prophetic method of Qur'anic education, that is, both on the level of teaching and on that of learning. We are going to compare them to our modern methods of approaching the Qur'an, and hopefully find out where we have fallen short and thus are not able to reach the satisfying results we long for. In this way, we will hopefully commit to reviving the Prophet's ﷺ method of teaching the Qur'an in our personal lives and our communities, so we may taste some of that faith and steadfastness that we read about in the stories of the companions, insha'Allah.

Disclaimer

Studying the Prophetic method of Qur'anic education requires recognizing that the Qur'an is not merely a book of historical interest or academic study, nor that its contents can be reduced to the mere seeking of its blessings in our lives. Rather, we need to recognize that the words of Allah, Exalted is He, were sent down as a guidance for mankind as well as a cure for their hearts, and that acting upon the Qur'an is a requirement for receiving those effects as we are going to lay out, insha'Allah. It is for this very reason that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned us that, "the Qur'an is either a proof for you or against you"³, indicating that not acting upon it becomes a burden rather than a blessing.

The Effects of the Prophetic Education on the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ

To emphasize the importance of learning the Qur’anic knowledge through the Prophetic method, we need to take a look at the effects of this method on those who had the honor to experience it firsthand. When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received his first revelation at the age of 40, he began calling the people to what Allah had revealed to him, explaining it to them in secret first, as he had been commanded. The early Muslims took refuge in the house of al-Arqam, an early companion who offered his home as a safe space for the believers to gather around the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and learn their faith.

In these blessed gatherings, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would recite to them the words of their Creator, purify their hearts, and explain to them the meaning of what had been sent down. These three aspects were from the obligations of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as Allah states in the following verse of the Qur’an: “He is the One Who raised for the illiterate ‘people’ a messenger from among themselves—reciting to them His revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray”⁴.

Remarkably, the effect of these study circles became evident almost immediately by transforming these companions from a previous state of clear misguidance to a level of unwavering steadfastness that continues to astonish those who study their lives.

Withstanding Persecution, Torture, and Death

After the third year of the Prophet's mission, when Islam was preached in public, those early Muslims faced severe persecution and torture from the nationalistic Arab idolaters who were in charge of Mecca during that time. Yet, although they were still in the early stages of being Muslims, they demonstrated an extraordinary level of resilience. They possessed something that mere information could not provide: a deep, internalized understanding of their purpose in life and an unshakeable conviction about their relationship with Allah, Exalted is He.

To illustrate this point further, I want to zoom in on three different examples from the lives of those early companions, which will demonstrate a pattern of extraordinary steadfastness in the religion:

1. Bilal ibn Rabah

Bilal, may Allah be pleased with him, was an Abyssinian slave owned by some of Mecca's pagan leaders when he embraced Islam. The early Muslim historian Ibn Hisham describes his master's reaction as follows: "He was Bilal ibn Rabah, and his mother's name was Hamama. He was sincere in his Islam and pure of heart. Umayya ibn Khalaf ibn Wahb ibn Hudhafa ibn Jumah used to bring him out during the intense midday heat and throw him on his back on the open ground of Mecca. Then he would have a huge rock placed on his chest, then say to him: 'No, by Allah! You will stay like this until you die, or deny Muhammad and worship al-Lat and al-Uzza.' But Bilal would say while in that suffering: 'One, One' (referring to Allah's oneness)."⁵

2. The Family of Yasir

The family of Yasir consisted of Yasir, his wife Sumayah, and their son Ammar. They were also from the early Muslims who were owned by masters from the Meccan idolaters. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to witness their severe torture, unable to intervene. However, he ﷺ reassured them with the glad tidings: “Patience, family of Yasir, for your promised destination is Paradise.”⁶ This torture escalated to the point where Sumayah was killed by Abu Jahl, one of the archenemies of Islam. The steadfastness of Sumayah and her willingness to give her life for what she learned from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ earned her recognition among Muslims as “the first female martyr in Islam”.

3. Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas

Although Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was from the Quraish tribe and was not enslaved like the aforementioned companions, his family found other ways to psychologically torture him by putting him under severe pressure so he would leave his new religion. This incident is recorded in an authentic narration: “Sa’d’s mother swore that she would never speak to him again until he disbelieved in his religion, and she would not eat or drink. She said, ‘You claim that God has commanded you to be good to your parents, and I am your mother, and I am ordering you to do this (i. e. leave Islam).’ He (Sa’d) said: ‘She stayed like this for three days until she fainted from exhaustion.’ Then another son of hers, named Umara, got up and gave her water to drink. She kept praying against Sa'd, so Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, revealed this verse in the Quran: ‘We have commanded people to honour their parents. But if they urge you to associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, then do not obey them’ [Al-Ankabut, 29:8].”⁷

These three examples offer just a small glimpse of the numerous similar incidents recorded from this period, where early Muslims demonstrated remarkable steadfastness despite facing brutal and relentless persecution.

To fully appreciate these examples, we need to understand more about the thirteen-year Meccan period in which those events took place. It is well known among Muslims that the Qur'an was not revealed at once, but rather as a progressive revelation over the course of 23 years. In the early years of Muhammad's ﷺ prophethood, which is known as 'the Meccan period' and prior to the migration to Medina, most Qur'anic rulings had not yet been revealed. This means, for example, that the five daily prayers were not yet established in the form that we know and practice today, as well as that many other fundamental aspects of Islamic practice, such as the Holy month of Ramadan and the obligatory zakat, had not yet been prescribed.

This context reveals the thought-provoking fact that these companions had less information about the Qur'an and its rulings than the average Muslim today. This also means that their steadfastness cannot simply be explained by arguing that they were more knowledgeable than us. Thus, we are faced with a pressing question: why does our greater knowledge of the Qur'an not produce the same level of steadfastness and resilience that the companions displayed?

In this whitepaper, I will argue that the problem does not lie in the information we have about the Qur'an per se, but rather it lies in how we teach and are taught this very information in our schools and communities. As a matter of fact, if we truly want the Qur'an to transform our minds and souls, we need to return to the Prophetic method of teaching its knowledge and studying it.

Since gathering all the evidence for the Prophetic method of Qur'anic education and presenting every characteristic of Muhammad's ﷺ noble school would go beyond the scope of this whitepaper, I will limit myself to presenting four clear-cut core characteristics. I hope that these four characteristics will not only make us aware that in modern times, we have strayed from the Prophetic way of teaching and learning the Qur'an's knowledge, but that they will also provide us with initial steps to correct our course and reform our misguided approaches that have led us to deviate from true guidance.

Four Characteristics of the Prophetic Method of Qur'anic Education

Based on authentic narrations and documented incidents of the companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, we can identify fundamental characteristics that distinguished the Prophet's ﷺ methodology of teaching the Qur'an:

1. Gradual Progression According to Spiritual Priorities (*Tadarujj*)

One characteristic of Prophetic education was a structured progression that prioritized foundational spiritual concepts before detailed legal rulings (yes, you may want to read that again!). This approach, known in Arabic as *tadarujj* (gradual progression), ensured that the human being developed a solid foundation for his belief first before further building upon it.

In fact, when the Qur'an was sent down over the course of around two decades, it was following this exact method of *tadarujj*, as Ai'sha, one of the greatest female scholars in Islamic history, as well as wife to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, may Allah be pleased with her, narrates to us. When answering questions from a man from Iraq who inquired about the nature of the Qur'anic revelation, she replied as follows:

“The first thing that was revealed from it (the Qur'an) was a chapter from the *Mufasssal* (shorter chapters) that mentioned Paradise and Hell. Only after people had turned to Islam did the lawful and unlawful (legal rulings) come down. If the first thing revealed had been, ‘Don't drink alcohol,’ they would have said, ‘We'll never give up alcohol!’ And if it had been, ‘Don't fornicate,’ they would have said, ‘We'll never give up fornicating!’ Indeed, this verse was revealed in Mecca to Muhammad ﷺ when I was just a young girl playing: ‘But the Hour is their appointed time — the Hour is more severe and bitter’ [Al-Qamar 54:46] The chapters of Al-Baqarah (The Cow) and An-Nisa (The Women) were only revealed when I was with him (the Messenger ﷺ of Allah).“⁸

This narration sheds light upon a crucial principle: **the religion was revealed according to a hierarchy of priorities.** The first priority was establishing core spiritual convictions:

- ❖ Worshipping created beings alongside Allah is fundamentally wrong.
- ❖ Allah alone is worthy of worship.
- ❖ Human beings exist for a purpose (worshipping Allah) and are accountable for their actions.
- ❖ There are two ultimate destinations: Paradise or Hellfire.
- ❖ Everyone will be questioned on the Day of Judgment about their deeds in this world.

Only after hearts had opened to Islam and people understood their fundamental mission in life did Allah begin to reveal specific legal rulings. While a form of prayer had been prescribed from the earliest days, emphasizing the unbreakable spiritual bond between the believer and his Creator, the five daily prayers in their detailed form as we know them today were only established toward the end of the Meccan era. Fasting in Ramadan, paying the zakat, as well as other pillars only followed later. Even the prohibition of alcohol was not revealed until well into the Medinan period.

What we really need to grasp here is that this method was not confined to the earliest days of Islam. Rather, it was the very methodology that the Prophet ﷺ maintained throughout his life in calling people to Allah. This point becomes evident when we examine the instructions that the Prophet ﷺ gave to his companion Mu'adh ibn Jabal, may Allah be pleased with him, when sending him to Yemen to call its people to Islam — an event that took place shortly before the Prophet's ﷺ passing:

“Call them to testify that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah. If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah has made obligatory upon them five prayers every day and night. If they obey you in that, then inform them that Allah has made obligatory upon them charity from their wealth - it is taken from their rich and given back to their poor.”⁹

Notice the clear progression in his wording: first monotheism, then prophethood, and finally the introduction of specific practices, i. e. the practical obligations of the faith.

This principle has profound implications for how we approach Qur'anic study today. Imagine a young Muslim who begins practicing only due to social pressure: without understanding his fundamental purpose in life, prayer and fasting feel burdensome rather than, as the Prophet ﷺ described, a source of relief for the believer. This gap between purpose and practice shows why the Prophetic methodology always laid the foundations first.

While establishing the right priorities formed the foundation of Prophetic education, the way knowledge was transmitted was just as crucial.

2. Internalizing and Understanding Before Memorization

This brings us to the second characteristic of the Prophetic methodology: an emphasis on comprehension and internalization before memorization. This approach ensured that students truly grasped what they were learning instead of merely accumulating information.

Jundub, may Allah be pleased with him, a companion of the Prophet ﷺ, provides crucial insight into the Prophet's ﷺ teaching methodology:

“We were with the Prophet ﷺ when we were young boys near the age of puberty, so we learned faith (*Iman*) before we learned the Qur'an. Then we learned the Qur'an, and it increased our faith.”¹⁰

This narration may seem puzzling first: how can one learn faith *before* learning the Qur'an? Another narration by Abdullah ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, sheds light on how this process actually unfolded:

“We lived for a while, and one of us would learn the faith (*Iman*) before the Qur'an, and the Surah would be revealed to Muhammad ﷺ, and he would teach us its halal and haram, and what should be reflected on, just as you learn the Qur'an.”

This clarifies the methodology: The Prophet ﷺ would first learn revelation, then explain its meanings, implications, and practical applications, and only after that would the companions memorize and incorporate it into their prayers and daily recitation.

Significantly, Ibn ‘Umar did not stop there, but he went on to point out a concerning trend that had already begun to emerge during his lifetime:

“I have seen men who are given the Qur’an, and one of them reads from the opening to the closing of the Qur’an, not knowing what it commands, what it prohibits, or what it should be reflected at, and he scatters it like bad dates.”¹¹

In order to illustrate this concerning trend, Ibn ‘Umar used a vivid analogy from his time. Arab date traders would carefully sort their stock before taking it to market, separating the good dates from those that had dried out and become worthless. The bad dates would be laid aside and discarded.

What Ibn ‘Umar did here was comparing this hasty, superficial approach to Qur’anic learning to the practice of discarding bad dates. Just as a merchant would quickly sort through and throw away worthless dates, these individuals rushed through the Qur’an, treating its verses as something to be finished rather than as guidance to be carefully examined and internalized.

This powerful analogy highlights how the approach determines the benefit: the exact same Qur’an that offers profound spiritual nourishment and practical guidance can yield no real benefit when approached hastily and superficially, rather than with the careful, contemplative method of the Prophetic teaching.

While memorization certainly has its place and benefits, this principle challenges contemporary methods that prioritize speed over comprehension. The Prophetic model makes clear that understanding should come first and accompany memorization.

In many contemporary Islamic educational settings, however, students are pressured to memorize large portions of the Qur'an quickly, with great emphasis on speed and quantity, while comprehension becomes secondary – sometimes even delayed for years. Many young Muslims in the past were forced by their families to attend Qur'anic memorization schools with harsh teachers, creating negative associations with Qur'anic learning. As a result, newer generations of Muslims in the West stopped sending their children to these schools altogether, sometimes cutting them off from Qur'anic education entirely. This illustrates the long-term damage caused by abandoning the Prophetic method.

The Prophetic model shows that memorization and understanding are meant to work hand in hand. Understanding lays the foundation that gives memorization meaning, while memorization, in turn, reinforces understanding. When these two are separated, memorization turns into mechanical repetition, and the Qur'an's transformative power remains out of reach for the student.

And yet, even a proper understanding of the Qur'an is incomplete without the next essential element of Prophetic education.

3. Knowledge Must Lead to Action

The Qur'an was not revealed merely for intellectual appreciation but as practical guidance for life. This makes the third characteristic of Prophetic education its insistence that knowledge be translated into action.

Allah, Exalted is He, states this principle explicitly in the Qur'an itself. He states:

“The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on (i. e., putting its teachings into practice) is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allāh. And Allāh does not guide the wrongdoing people.”¹²

This verse specifically refers to the Jews who were given the Torah, revealed from Allah in its original form, but failed to act upon its guidance despite being very knowledgeable about what Allah had sent down to them. It stands as a powerful warning to all later communities of believers about the danger of separating knowledge from action.

The comparison Allah chose is deliberately striking and highlights several key points:

- ❖ The donkey gains no benefit from the books it carries.
- ❖ The books become a burden rather than a blessing.
- ❖ More books only increase the burden without increasing the benefit.

This analogy becomes even more striking when we picture it in our minds: this is not a donkey walking freely, but one weighed down by a towering stack of books. One after another, more volumes are placed on its back, until the weight becomes unbearable. These books may very well contain the most profound knowledge, wisdom and guidance – and yet this animal gains nothing from them except the physical burden it must carry around. For it, they are nothing but a heavy, meaningless load.

Similarly, accumulating Qur'anic knowledge without acting upon it creates a burden on the person rather than a blessing. The more verses we memorize, the more meanings we learn, the more rulings we study - all without implementation - the heavier the spiritual load becomes on our souls. What should be a source of guidance and increase of faith transforms into a weight that may eventually crush us.

This is exactly why the Prophet ﷺ warned us that “the Quran is evidence for you or against you”¹³ Whether it testifies in our favor or against us depends entirely on one thing: whether we act upon its guidance or allow our knowledge to remain a burden that we will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgment.

In strong contrast to this cautionary example, the Prophet's ﷺ era witnessed an elite group of companions known as *al-Qurra* (the plural of *Qari*, meaning reciter or reader). Unlike many modern reciters, who are primarily known for their beautiful voices, these companions followed the Prophetic method of pairing Qur'anic knowledge and internalization with exemplary action. In the time of the Messenger ﷺ, the very label 'Qurra' carried a meaning far deeper than what we associate with reciters today. When we hear the term now, we usually picture someone who recites the Qur'an beautifully. While that is not a bad association, the original Qurra embodied something far more profound.

We see this distinction clearly in the authentic narration where Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

“A group of people came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, ‘Send men with us who will teach us the Qur'an and the Sunnah.’ He sent seventy men from the *Ansar*, called the *Qurra*, including my uncle Haram, who read the Qur'an and studied at night to learn, and during the day they would bring water and put it in the mosque, and they would cut wood and sell it and buy food for the people of the *Safaa* and the poor with it.”¹⁴

This narration reveals the remarkable qualities of the original *Qurra*: they were the most knowledgeable about the Qur'an, and their knowledge was inseparable from action. By day, they would chop wood, cut down trees, and sell the wood in the marketplace. With the proceeds, they gave charity to the people of *Safaa* — poor students who lived in the Prophet's ﷺ mosque, studying under him yet having no means of income. By night, these same *Qurra* would stand in prayer, reciting and reflecting upon the Qur'an.

These companions embodied the principle that the strongest connection to the Qur'an naturally leads to the strongest actions. They never separated their Qur'anic knowledge from practical service to the community, nor did they see their scholarship as a reason to avoid physical labor or charitable responsibility.

This also explains why Abdullah ibn Umar himself - the very companion who previously described the Prophetic Method of Qur'anic Education - took eight years to complete his study of Surah Al-Baqarah.¹⁵ This was not due to a weakness in memorization, but rather because he sought to learn it “the right way,” following the methodology the Messenger ﷺ had shown them as the proper approach to studying the Qur'an.

His approach involved going through the surah systematically: internalizing its meanings, reflecting on what required contemplation, acting upon its obligations, and avoiding its prohibitions. It is also worth noting that Surah al-Baqarah contains perhaps the most diverse collections of rulings in the Qur'an. It addresses debt and financial transactions, marriage regulations, fasting in Ramadan, guidelines for warfare, and many other aspects of daily life that Ibn Umar needed to understand, implement, and integrate into his everyday practice before moving on.

Because this methodical approach was the norm during the Prophet's ﷺ time, it should not be surprising to us to read that Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

“A man was writing in the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ who had read Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran, and if a man had read Al-Baqarah and Al-Imran, he was considered great among us.”¹⁶

This narration demonstrates that a person who had truly “read” these chapters - meaning they had learned them according to the Prophetic methodology of understanding, internalizing, and acting upon their teachings - was held in high esteem precisely because this represented comprehensive spiritual and practical development. The greatness attributed to them was not due to mere recitation, but rather to the profound transformation that resulted from engaging with these extensive chapters in the way that the Prophet ﷺ had taught.

4. The Continuous Purification of the Heart (Tazkiyah)

The last characteristic of Prophetic education I want to highlight is its emphasis on the continual purification of the heart. Allah, Exalted is He, affirms this principle in the verse we referenced earlier, stating:

“He is the One Who raised for the illiterate ‘people’ a messenger from among themselves — reciting to them His revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray.”¹⁷

This verse makes clear that the Messenger’s mission was not limited to reciting the verses and teaching the Book and wisdom, but also included ‘purifying them’ (yuzakkihim).

In an authentic narration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explains why this continuous purification is essential:

“Temptations are presented to hearts like a reed mat is woven stick by stick. Any heart that absorbs them gets a black dot marked on it, and any heart that rejects them gets a white dot marked on it, until the heart becomes white like a smooth stone - no temptation can harm it as long as the heavens and earth exist. The other heart becomes black and dusty like an upturned cup, recognizing no good as good and rejecting no evil as evil, except what matches its own desires.”¹⁸

In our modern day and age, what is being described in this hadith may remind us of the experience when scrolling through social media platforms like TikTok – swipe after swipe, one influencer after another, each presenting content that we either admit into our hearts or reject. We are constantly exposed to countless images, ideas, and influences - many of which we know are haram - yet the ease and frequency of exposure make resistance profoundly challenging.

But these trials go far beyond digital media. Every time we enter places we shouldn’t go to, sit in the company of people who harm our faith, or engage in actions we know displease Allah - all whilst knowing that these things are wrong - we face the same choice: resist and earn a white dot, or give in and earn a black dot. Every spiritual trial presents only these two possible outcomes.

As the hadith describes, this process ultimately leads the heart to one of two end-states: either we persist in resisting and purifying it until it becomes like a polished stone that does not allow any impurity in it, or we keep yielding to temptation until our moral compass is completely lost.

Understanding this reality explains why purification was so essential to Prophetic education. The companions recognized that without continuous spiritual cleansing, their hearts would gradually absorb corruption until they lost the ability to benefit from the Qur'an's guidance altogether. A heart in this state cannot truly learn, comprehend, or act upon divine revelation, rendering all other aspects of Islamic education ineffective

This is one of the very reasons why we see many Muslims today who know they should pray and adhere to Islamic teachings, yet consistently follow their desires instead. They may acknowledge the Qur'anic commands, understand the meanings, and even grasp the reasoning behind many verses – but they fail to act because their hearts have been compromised by a lack of purification.

The early Muslim community understood this principle practically and therefore integrated various forms of purification into their daily lives. Here are just some examples:

The Night Prayer

One of the first practices the Prophet ﷺ established with his companions during the early years of Islam, even during the years of persecution, was *tahajjud* (night prayer). This created regular opportunities for spiritual cleansing and direct connection with Allah, helping them resist the severe trials they faced.

Just consider the following verses that were sent down in the earliest stage of Muhammad's ﷺ prophethood, ordering him to stand in the night prayer as a spiritual preparation for the heavy mission that was awaiting him and his companions:

“O you wrapped ‘in your clothes’! Stand all night ‘in prayer’ except a little — ‘pray’ half the night, or a little less, or a little more — and recite the Quran ‘properly’ in a measured way. ‘For’ We will soon send upon you a weighty revelation. Indeed, worship in the night is more impactful and suitable for recitation. For during the day you are over-occupied ‘with worldly duties’. ‘Always’ remember the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly.”¹⁹

Supplication

Muslims know from authentic narrations that Abu Bakr was the best of the Prophet’s ﷺ companions. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, made tremendous contributions to Islam: he was among the first to embrace Islam and call others to the religion alongside the Messenger ﷺ, he freed Muslim slaves who were being tortured, and he personally accompanied the Messenger ﷺ on the dangerous migration from Mecca to Medina.

Yet despite his elevated status, this very companion - fully aware of the fragile nature of the human heart and the need for ongoing purification - approached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with a humble request:

“O Messenger of Allah, teach me a supplication that I can make during my prayer.” He ﷺ said: “Say: ‘O Allah, indeed I have wronged myself greatly, and no one forgives sins except You, so forgive me with forgiveness from You and have mercy on me. Indeed, You are the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’”²⁰

This example shows that Abu Bakr understood that genuine engagement with the Qur’an demands continuous cleansing of the heart and maintaining humility before Allah.

Charity

The companions recognized that giving charity (sadaqah) purifies the heart, and so they made it a consistent part of their worship. This practice reflected the Qur’anic principle in which Allah instructed His Prophet ﷺ:

“Take from their wealth ‘O Prophet’ charity to purify and bless them, and pray for them — surely your prayer is a source of comfort for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”²¹

The verse explicitly links charity with purification (*tuzakkihim*), illustrating that giving with sincere intention becomes a means of cleansing the heart.

Conclusion

Acknowledging that there is a Prophetic method for learning the Qur’an is only the starting point – it should not remain just another piece of information stored in our minds. The crucial step is to bring its characteristics into our daily lives. To support you in taking this step, I will conclude with a few practical tips as a starting point for implementation.

Get the Priorities Right (Characteristic #1)

Before diving into complex rulings and issues, first make sure you truly understand your purpose in this world. Begin with the core foundations of Islam: develop firm belief in Allah’s existence and His exclusive right to be worshiped. Then make sure you understand why Allah has created this world and the universe around us and what role you play within His creation. Reflect on the Islamic perspective of death and the reality of what awaits the human being after it. Let these truths shape your worldview, grounded in the abundant evidence Islam provides, rather than remaining ideas you merely heard from friends or family. Remember that a lack of solidness in this foundation may be the reason why fulfilling your religious duties feel so burdensome on you.

Internalize Before You Memorize (Characteristic #2)

Prioritize comprehension before memorization in your studies of the noble words of Allah. Do not allow anyone to hasten you through your personal journey with the Qur'an. If needed, use reliable translations of the Qur'an as well as accessible explanations - like Tafsīr as-Sa'dī, for example - to grasp the meanings of its verses and internalize them. Find local teachers, whether Imams or students of knowledge, who follow this Prophetic method and guide you step by step, allowing your connection with the Qur'an to grow naturally and meaningfully.

Act Upon Your Knowledge (Characteristic #3)

Constantly remind yourself of the importance of action in Islam, and never let the amount of information you have gathered about the religion to deceive you into thinking it is enough. Reflect on the example Allah gives in His Book of those who received revelation yet failed to act upon it. And remember the Prophet's ﷺ warning: the Qur'an will come on the Day of Judgment as either a witness for you or against you, depending on whether you lived by its guidance.

Constantly Purify Your Heart (Characteristic #4)

Know that the human heart is weak and that its moral compass can become corrupted if you do not maintain a constant process of purifying it. Continuously ask Allah for guidance and maintain acts of worship in your life that purify the heart. Also be aware that a corrupted heart may blur your perspective, leaving you unable to distinguish right from wrong and making it easy to abandon Allah's commands in favor of your own whims and desires.

The Path Forward

If we work on correcting our way of approaching the Qur'an, starting with these four characteristics, we may begin to taste some of the fruits that the companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, experienced from the way the Prophet ﷺ educated them. When this understanding in turn spreads to different circles within our communities - whether through formal study, family education, or community gatherings - it can create a multiplied effect that brings about positive change in the ummah altogether, insha'Allah.

The methodology exists, the guidance is clear, and the examples of the companions demonstrate its effectiveness. There is a right way of learning the Qur'an and a wrong way, as Abdullah ibn 'Umar as well as the other companions of the Prophet ﷺ showed us. If we do not see the desired results of the Qur'an in our hearts, souls, and actions, it may be because we're not learning it the right way. That is when we must start adjusting our approach according to these proven characteristics of Prophetic education.

Footnotes

1. Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:137.
2. Surah An-Nahl, 16:44.
3. Sahih Muslim 223.
4. Surah Al-Jumu'ah, 62:2.
5. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah (833 AD), 318.
6. Al-Hakim, 5666.
7. Sahih Muslim, 1748.
8. Sahih al-Bukhari, 4993.
9. Sahih al-Bukhari, 1395.
10. Sunan ibn Majah, 61.
11. Al-Hakim, 101. Al-Bayhaqi, 5355.
12. Surah Al-Jumu'ah, 62:5.
13. Sahih Muslim, 223.
14. Sahih Muslim, 677.
15. Malik, 537.
16. Musnad Ahmad, 12216.
17. Surah Al-Jumu'ah, 62:2.
18. Sahih Muslim, 144.
19. Surah al-Muzzammil, 73:1-8.
20. Sahih al-Bukhari, 834.
21. Surah at-Tawbah, 9:103.

This whitepaper is published by One Ummah Forum and may be freely shared and distributed in its original, unaltered form.

The content within this document may be copied, quoted, or repurposed for non-commercial purposes only, including educational or research-related use, provided that proper attribution is given to One Ummah Forum as the original source.

Commercial use, redistribution for profit, or any modification of the content is strictly prohibited.

© One Ummah Forum. All rights reserved.



The author of this whitepaper - **Ustd. Erfan Mirzaie** - has thoroughly engaged with the subject matter through independent study and in-depth research. Great care was taken to verify sources and ensure the accuracy of the information presented. After completion, the content was reviewed and approved by the Quality Management Team to ensure that it meets our standards for clarity, reliability, and scholarly rigor.