


Tarbiyah Resource Development

Jumada at-Thani, 1446 | December 2024

Part II: Living the Glorious Qur'ān: Stories of Transformation

An illustration of two children sitting on the ground under a large, leafy tree. The child on the left is kneeling and reading a book, while the child on the right is sitting cross-legged and reading a book. The background is a warm, golden sunset with silhouettes of birds flying in the sky. The tree's roots are thick and spread out on the ground.

To truly embody the teachings of the Qur'ān, we must make them the central guiding principle of our lives. This is a lifelong commitment that requires ongoing reflection, growth, and action. The Qur'ān should not be a fleeting presence that we approach only during times of difficulty or need; rather, it should serve as a steadfast companion, offering guidance, wisdom, and support at every stage of our journey through life on this earth. The Qur'ān serves as a reference point for all aspects of life—personal, social, economic, and political. It is the ultimate guide for our interactions with others, our management of wealth, our establishment of justice, and our cultivation of compassion and empathy within our homes and society. To live the Qur'ān necessitates a profound commitment to embodying its values and striving to uphold its teachings in every action, thought, and decision we make.

A true litmus test for our commitment to making the Qur'ān a central reference point in our lives is the fundamental question: Do we live by the Qur'ān every day? This question prompts us to evaluate whether our actions align with its teachings and whether we uphold its values in our relationships, our work, and our daily routines. Do we truly love the Qur'ān and rely on its wisdom with complete conviction? Throughout history, we find numerous examples of how the companions lived by the Qur'ān during critical moments, serving as powerful sources of inspiration for us to follow in their blessed footsteps.

The Transformative Power of the Qur'ān: Stories of the Companions (ra)

The companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exemplified what it meant to live the Qur'ān fully. They not only memorized its verses but were deeply moved to tears by them. The revelation of a single verse could keep them awake all night as they reflected on their attitudes and assessed whether they were truly internalizing its meanings. In the most critical moments of their lives, the verses of the Qur'ān served as their safety net. Their stories highlight how the Qur'ān, even in its early stages of revelation, profoundly impacted their lives and the lives of those around them.

The transformative power of the Qur'ān, as demonstrated through the lives of the blessed companions, offers invaluable lessons for us as we strive to connect with its essence and embody it in our lives today. These stories illustrate not only personal transformations but also the profound collective impact of living by the Qur'ān on humanity at large. While the examples provided here are but a small glimpse, the more we study the Qur'ān and the context of its revelation and implementation within the first community of believers, the greater depth of understanding and inspiration we can uncover regarding the transformative power of living the Qur'ān.

1. Bilāl ibn Rabāh (ra): The Qur'ān's Power to Sustain Through Torture

Bilāl ibn Rabāh (ra) was known for his unwavering faith and perseverance. Born into slavery, Bilāl (ra) embraced Islam and became one of the earliest converts of Islam. However, his conversion came at a significant price. His master, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, subjected him to severe torture, dragging him through the scorching desert with a heavy stone placed on his chest in a ruthless attempt to force him to renounce his beliefs. Despite the immense suffering he endured, Bilāl's steadfastness and commitment to Allah ﷻ remained unshaken, making him a symbol of resilience and loyalty in the face of adversity.

When asked to renounce his belief, Bilāl would simply repeat the words "Aḥad, Aḥad" (One, One), affirming the Oneness of Allah ﷻ. At that time, Bilāl (ra) did not possess a comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'ān, as only a few verses had been revealed. Nevertheless, his unwavering faith in Allah's ﷻ Oneness, as conveyed in the Qur'ān, was sufficient to sustain him through unimaginable pain. His strength did not come from an extensive understanding of Qur'ānic verses but from his firm belief in Tawḥīd, the central message of the Qur'ān. Despite enduring severe torture, he remained firm in his faith, choosing to reject idol worship. Later, he recounted to 'Umar (ra) that at that time, he knew so little about the faith that all he could think to say was, "Aḥad, Aḥad."

Bilāl (ra)'s story exemplifies how the message of the Qur'ān can empower believers to endure trials with patience and perseverance. His steadfast faith in the divine message, despite limited knowledge of the Qur'ān, underscores its transformative power in leading hearts toward Allah ﷻ.

2. Abbād ibn Bishr (ra): A Soul Immersed in the Beauty of the Qur’ān Amidst Extreme Physical Pain

Abbād ibn Bishr (ra) was a companion known for his devotion to prayer and the Qur’ān. While fighting the renegades in Najd, he took his turn on night watch and was struck by three arrows, one after another, while engaged in prayer. Despite the pain and injury, as blood began to flow, he continued to recite Sūrah Al-Kahf. He was so immersed in the beauty and comfort he derived from the Qur’ānic verses. His profound love for the Qur’ān provided him with the strength to persevere, allowing him to focus on the recitation of the Sūrah even amidst the excruciating pain he was experiencing.

Abbād's story illustrates the Qur’ān's remarkable ability to transform a person’s inner state, granting them both spiritual and physical resilience. Even in the most perilous situations, the Qur’ān remained his source of comfort, strength, and focus. When his companion, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir (ra), asked him why he waited until the third arrow to wake him up, Abbād replied, "I was in the midst of reciting verses of the Qur’ān that filled my soul with awe, and I did not want to cut short the recitation. The Prophet ﷺ had commanded me to commit this Sūrah to memory. Death would have been dearer to me than for the recitation of this Sūrah to be interrupted." His story serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of the Qur’ān to inspire believers, fortifying them in times of trial and tribulation and providing a comfort and ease that is almost unfathomable.

3. Asmā’ bint Abū Bakr (ra): Exemplifying Tadabbur of the Qur’ān

Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah Şād:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ



“(This is) a Book (the Qur’ān) which We have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over its verses, and that those of understanding may remember.”

Qur’an, 38:29

Tadabbur is the act of deeply comprehending, reflecting upon, and considering the implications of the verses of the Qur’ān that one reads, thereby inspiring actions that are a result of this reflection. In examining the life and example of Asmā’ (ra), we witness her commitment to the Qur’ān through the practice of tadabbur. Her husband, Al-Zubayr ibn ‘Awwām (ra), remarked, “I entered the room and found that she was in prayer, reciting the verse:

فَمَنْ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَانَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ



“But Allah has been gracious to us and has saved us from the Torment of the Fire.”

Qur’an, 32:27

As Al-Zubayr waited to speak to her, he found Asmā’ deeply immersed in a verse, repeating it and weeping profusely. She was so engrossed in the verse that he decided to leave and go to the market. After some time, when he returned home, he found that she was still absorbed in the same verse continuing to weep and connect with it. Her ability to understand, reflect on, and become captivated by just a few words of the Qur’ān illustrates the profound impact of Allah’s ﷻ words. This daily experience of gratitude and connection to the gift of the Qur’ān serves as a powerful example, offering many lessons for us to draw upon in our own lives.

4. Ka’b ibn Mālik (ra): Acceptance of Repentance

Ka’b ibn Mālik (ra) was one of the three companions who participated in every battle alongside the Prophet ﷺ. However, when the army was assembled for the expedition to Tabūk, they did not join although they lacked a legitimate excuse at the time. This failure arose from his own procrastination. Upon the Prophet’s ﷺ return, Ka’b found himself among those criticized for their absence, and he felt a deep sense of remorse. It was at this moment of distress Ka’b (ra) said to himself that “...I came to the conclusion that nothing could save me but the telling of truth, so I decided to speak the truth...” He, along with the other two companions, admitted they had no valid excuse for not participating. Although the Prophet praised him for his honesty, he did not absolve him. Ka’b’s situation remained unresolved, leaving him uncertain about the acceptance of his repentance for fifty days.

After enduring this period of doubts regarding his repentance, verses of the Qur’ān were finally revealed, announcing the acceptance of his repentance. The story of Ka’b (ra) and the verses of the Qur’ān concerning repentance that brought him ease illustrate how the Qur’ān encapsulates a pathway for every human condition. Even amidst personal failure, it provides a narrative of redemption and spiritual growth, highlighting the contexts within which its verses were revealed, and reflecting genuine human emotions and experiences. These verses serve as eternal lessons for readers throughout time, and engaging with them today imparts blessings upon those who read the very words that have been preserved in the timeless text of the Qur’ān. The story of Ka’b (ra) and the verses of repentance revealed in the Qur’ān that brought him ease exemplify how the Qur’ān provides a pathway for every human condition. Even in moments of personal failure, it narrates a lived story of redemption and spiritual growth, reflecting the contexts within which the verses were revealed and resonating with genuine human emotions and experiences. These verses serve as eternal lessons for readers throughout time, and engaging with them today brings blessings to those who recite the very words that have been preserved in the timeless text of the Qur’ān.

5. Sālim Mawlā Abū Hudhayfah (ra): A Call to Beautify our Deeds with the Beauty of The Qur'ān

Sālim Mawlā Abū Hudhayfah (ra) was a freed slave who became one of the early Muslims, known for his deep knowledge of the Qur'ān. The Prophet ﷺ is recorded to have said, “Learn the Qur'ān from four people: Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, Sālim Mawlā Abū Hudhayfah, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, and Mu'adh ibn Jabl.” During the Battle of Yamāmah, a critical confrontation against the false prophet Musaylimah ibn Kadhāb, believers found themselves heavily outnumbered and facing an intimidating situation. Observing the resolve of his fellow believers beginning to wane, Sālim (ra) took the initiative to lead from the frontlines, using the Qur'ān to inspire courage among the troops. He shouted, “Ya ahl al-Qur'ān, zayyinū al-Qur'ān bi a'mālikum,” which translates to, “O you who carry the Qur'ān, complement its beauty with your deeds.” He repeated this vital reminder, emphasizing the importance of embodying the Qur'ānic teachings in both words and actions.

Despite the pain and challenges of battle, Sālim continued to encourage the believers to live out what they had recited. His powerful exhortation served as a profound reminder for the Muslim army to not just recite the Qur'ān but to actively live by its teachings. Sālim (ra) recognized that living by the Qur'ān's teachings during times of difficulty represented the true test of faith. His story exemplifies the Qur'ān's ability to inspire action, shape behavior, and guide individuals toward righteousness, especially in moments of profound adversity.

6. Khālid ibn Walīd (ra): Loving the Qur'ān above Everything Else

Khālid ibn Walīd (ra) is known for his strategic acumen and sharp decision-making, is celebrated as one of the most famous military leaders in Islamic history. His relationship with the Qur'ān reflects deep personal introspection and an unwavering commitment to the Truth. Although Khālid (ra) hailed from a noble lineage, his father was a staunch disbeliever who stood strongly against the message of Islam. As a result, several verses from the Qur'ān referencing the father of Khālid (ra) have become etched in history and are recited as part of the narrative surrounding his legacy. Despite the challenging nature of these verses, Khālid (ra) recognized that his faith and acceptance of the Truth of the Qur'ān could not be complete without understanding them. Driven by this realization, he sought out Sālim Mawlā Abū Hudhayfa—one of the individuals the Prophet ﷺ had specifically mentioned as a source to learn the Qur'ān. Khālid (ra) was determined to comprehend and accept the very verses that addressed his father. His willingness to confront the painful truths of the Qur'ān reflects his unconditional commitment to truth and his readiness to sacrifice the most profound aspects of himself in his journey of loving the Qur'ān. This story also teaches us an important lesson about choosing our own paths. It reminds us that we are not held accountable for the beliefs and actions of our families; sins are not transferable. Each individual must seek the truth for themselves, navigating their own journey toward faith and understanding.

7. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ra): Character and Judgement Shaped by the Qur’ān

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ra) stands as another remarkable example of the transformative power of the Qur’ān. Before his conversion to Islam, ‘Umar (ra) was a staunch opponent of the Prophet ﷺ and his message. His hostility was so intense that he was in an emotionally heightened state, determined to find and attack the Prophet ﷺ. However, on his way, he was unexpectedly diverted and discovered that some members of his own family had accepted Islam. Upon witnessing some verses of the Qur’ān with his sister and reading them, ‘Umar (ra) was profoundly moved. The Qur’ān resonated deeply within him, and in that moment, his heart was touched, leading to a life-altering decision to accept Islam. ‘Umar's conversion sparked a significant internal transformation, as the teachings of the Qur’ān guided him to embrace justice, compassion, and wisdom on his journey toward the Truth.

‘Umar’s story is a powerful testament to the Qur’ān’s ability to reshape a person's character and worldview. His leadership, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to justice were all profoundly influenced by the teachings of the Qur’ān, enabling him to become one of the greatest leaders in Islamic history. The transformative power of the Qur’ān was evident in his capacity to apply its principles to his governance, ensuring that justice and righteousness were upheld. Numerous examples from his life and during his khilāfah illustrate how he implemented these teachings, reflecting his dedication to the moral and ethical standards set forth in the Qur’ān.

8. Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd (ra): Unsurmountable Joy in Sharing the Message of the Qur’ān

In the early stages of Islam, as the Qur’ān was being revealed and the newly developed Muslim community faced fierce opposition, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, particularly those without tribal support, endured particularly brutal oppression. During this challenging time, the decision was made to avoid openly proclaiming Islam. However, discussions arose about the possibility of publicly reciting some verses of the Qur’ān at the Ka‘bah, raising the question of who would be bold enough to undertake such a courageous act. Part of the deliberation centered on who might be least susceptible to persecution in taking on this bold task.

Amidst this discourse, Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd (ra) could no longer contain his zeal and volunteered for the task. As a freed slave, he recognized that he was especially vulnerable to increased persecution due to his social status and lack of a protective clan. Yet, he became the first to publicly recite the Qur’ān in Makkah. His recitation drew fierce opposition from the Quraysh, who attacked him ruthlessly in an attempt to silence him. The assault was so severe that his collarbones collapsed, leaving him unconscious under their boots.

Despite this brutal treatment, Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (ra) remained steadfast and confident in the transformative power of the Qur'ān. He later reflected that there was no day when the enemies felt lighter upon him than the day he was attacked, for the Qur'ān elevated him in ways nothing else could. He was ready to return and recite again the very next day. Abdullah (ra) felt the divine blessing and mercy of the Qur'ān, which was revealed from the heavens to humanity. The elevated honor of being among those who carried the message of the Qur'ān far surpassed the physical persecution imposed by the disbelievers. Inspired by the beauty of this sacred text, he felt compelled to share its message, a source of insurmountable joy for him.

9. Zayd ibn Thābit (ra): The Qur'ān's Role in Shaping Youth and Responsibility

During the time of Abū Bakr (ra), it was determined by 'Umar (ra) and Abū Bakr (ra) that compiling the entire Qur'ān into a single written book was crucial for its preservation. Zayd ibn Thābit (ra) was entrusted with the monumental responsibility of gathering the entire Qur'ān. At only 20 or 21 years old, Zayd (ra) bore an immense responsibility, as this task would have profound implications for the entire ummah for generations to come and until the end of time. His dedication to preserving the Qur'ān exemplified the power of the text to shape individuals, regardless of their age, and to instill within them a strong sense of duty and responsibility toward its preservation. Zayd's example illustrates the Qur'ān's pivotal role in guiding and molding young people. Despite his youth, he demonstrated remarkable wisdom and responsibility, earning the trust of the leaders of the ummah to safeguard the sacred text. This story serves as a reminder of the critical role that youth play within the community and the potential they possess to take on significant responsibilities and contribute meaningfully to the preservation and advancement of their faith.

10. Hafṣah bint 'Umar (ra): Protector of the Qur'ān

Hafṣah bint 'Umar (ra) is one of the most remarkable and respected figures in early Islamic history, notable not only as one of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ but also for her significant role in the preservation of the Qur'ān. Hafṣah (ra) was among the few women of her time who had the rare privilege of reading and writing—a skill not commonly found among women in pre-Islamic Arabia. This educational advantage equipped her particularly well to preserve and safeguard the Qur'ān. Her literacy and intellect were crucial in her ability to comprehend and meticulously protect the sacred text.

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Qur'ān was preserved in various forms, including oral recitation and written fragments on materials such as parchment, bones, and leaves. The compilation of the Qur'ān was entrusted to Zayd ibn Thābit (ra), and the manuscript containing these written revelations in fragmentary form was kept in the care of Hafṣah (ra).

It was from this manuscript that the final, unified compilation of the Qur'ān was later produced. Under the caliphate of Abū Bakr (ra), the Qur'ānic text was compiled into a single, comprehensive book, which was subsequently distributed to various regions of the Islamic empire. Hafṣah's literacy, her role as a custodian of the Qur'ān, and her active participation in the intellectual life of the early Muslim community highlight her vital contributions to the preservation and development of the Qur'ān. The impact of her efforts continues to benefit us to this day.

The Prophet ﷺ was a Living Example of Qur'ānic Transformation

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was profoundly affected by the divine revelations he received. His tears were not merely a display of emotion; they reflected his deep connection with the Qur'ān and his continual state of humility and submission to Allah ﷻ. This emotional response reveals the depth of his understanding and the transformative power of the words he conveyed, illustrating how the Qur'ān resonated within him and shaped his heart and actions. Let us take a moment to reflect on this profound exchange. Sa'd ibn Hishām asked 'Ā'ishah "O mother of the believers, tell me about the character of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him." 'Ā'ishah said, "Have you not read the Qur'ān?" I said, "Of course." Aisha said, "Verily, the character of the Prophet of Allah was the Qur'ān."

This profound statement underscores the intrinsic connection between the teachings of the Qur'ān and the character of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He embodied the principles and morals of the Qur'ān, serving as the best person in all of humanity and the most perfect example for all. His character exemplifies the Qur'ān and stands as a testament to its teachings. This reflection invites us to consider how we can strive to integrate the values of the Qur'ān into our own lives, using the exemplary character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as our inspiration to truly live the Qur'ān.

Conclusion: Reviving the Qur'ān in Our Lives

The companions of the Prophet ﷺ experienced continual enhancement through their embodiment of the Qur'ān. For them, the Qur'ān was not merely a book to be read or recited; it served as a guiding force that shaped their lives, refined their characters, and directed their actions. Their enduring connection to the Qur'ān allowed them to purify their hearts, elevate their moral standards, and foster a profound sense of connection, love, and gratitude toward Allah ﷻ. The Qur'ān's impact on the Ṣaḥābah is undeniable. They lived by its teachings, were transformed by its wisdom, and allowed it to guide every aspect of their lives. This transformation was not merely intellectual; it was a profound spiritual metamorphosis that permeated their hearts and influenced their actions. The first generations of believers exemplified how deep reflection on the Qur'ān can awaken consciousness and foster a renewed commitment to faith. Their lives serve as a powerful testament to the Qur'ān's ability to inspire transformative change and instill a lasting devotion to the principles of Islam.

To live the Qur'ān is to embody its teachings in every moment of our lives. It calls us to transform ourselves both individually and collectively, to revive its message within our communities, and to ensure its legacy endures for generations to come. By living the Qur'ān, we connect with our true purpose and find guidance on our journey toward righteousness and eternal success. We must ask ourselves: *Are we truly living the Qur'ān?* Are we making its message central to our lives, and are we striving to embody its wisdom and values in all that we do?

May Allah ﷻ guide us to live the Qur'ān, to reflect on its meanings, and to embody its teachings in every aspect of our lives. Ameen.