

## Upbringing and Education Based on the Quran

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All praise be to Allah, and may His peace and blessings be on the last Messenger, Muhammad.

## The importance of teaching and upbringing through the Quranic methodology

The issue of Tarbiyah, which is the Islamic teaching, disciplining and upbringing, is the most important issue when moving with Islam and calling to the correct path of Allah. Whoever accepts the Truth, believes in it and proceeds to call people to establish it on earth and in their lives

needs to go through a long process of upbringing and discipline. This process needs time as well as an emotional connection and interaction with the Truth. Additionally, it requires movement and actions that translate this Truth to a reality. This Islamic upbringing or Tarbiyah must be based on a clear methodology.

Before reaching the great pinnacle, the first group of Muslims actually started from the very bottom. The emergence of that first group was not an immediate miracle, but occurred due to the implementation of a gradual and Divine methodology for upbringing. This methodology was based on the Quran and it elevated those individuals from the depths of darkness. The great news is that this Divine methodology is available for all of humanity, and is certainly within the capability of all humans; however it requires great efforts and struggle.

The Divine methodology for upbringing initiates its program from the current level and reality of each group and elevates them steadily. This is exactly how discipline was initiated in the first Muslim group, starting at the house of Al-Arqam, where they were guided by the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). The methodology purified them from the naive Arab Jahiliyah to reach a great summit in a relatively short period of time that did not exceed a quarter of a century. For the success of the Islamic

upbringing, there was one required condition: the Muslims had to surrender and submit to the Divine methodology which is derived from the Quran and the teachings of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (pbuh).



### The material for upbringing is the Quran

Many past and present scholars have spoken about the great role of the Quran in Islamic upbringing. The intention of this short article is to only point toward that direction and not to comprehensively review what has already been spoken or written about this issue. Our intention is to sincerely benefit from the guidance of the Quran, especially in the first phase of the call to Islam.

We should often remind ourselves that the generation of the companions of the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) is a generation that was lifted from the depths of darkness to the light by Allah (swt) using this great and blessed Book, the Quran.

The Quran was revealed in very small portions according to the needs and reality that was associated with the first phase of upbringing. It was revealed and intended to be applied step by step, as it was not composed of

mere philosophical ideas for intellectual amusement. Hence, the first generation received the Quran for practical application, and it became their way of life as they discarded all other ideas and theories that were inherited, taught or practiced in their previous lives.



### The aim of the Islamic upbringing

Allah (swt) said in the Quran: “Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom...” [The Holy Quran, Aali ‘Imran: 164]. The word “purifying” in the previous verse essentially means Tarbiyah or upbringing in modern terminology. Allah (swt) has stated throughout the Quran that this Quran is indeed a guide for those who are pious and righteous. Hence, being righteous and pious is the aim of the Islamic upbringing, as is highlighted in the verse: “O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is the most righteous of you.” [The Holy Quran, Al-Hujurat: 13]. All people are equal in that they came from Adam and Eve but they surpass

each other by their degree of piety and righteousness, hence “The most honorable of you with Allah is the most righteous of you.”

Al-Bukhari narrated that Muhammad (pbuh) was asked: “Who is the most honorable among people?” The Messenger replied: “The most honorable of you with Allah are those who have taqwa (piety and righteousness).” Muslim narrated another hadith in his book that Muhammad (pbuh) said: “Allah will not look at your looks and wealth but will look at your hearts and deeds.” Hence this hadith emphasizes that the Quranic upbringing aims to increase the belief in the heart as well as increase the good deeds performed.

In another hadith narrated in Muslim and Al-Bukhari, the Messenger (pbuh) said: “The family of so and so are not my supporters. My supporter is Allah and the righteous believing people.” Thus belief, piety, and righteousness open the heart and soul for guidance, light, and the proper lessons to be learned in life. A properly guided heart and soul enables one to make good choices and truly benefit from the lessons of life, and also endure the struggles faced on the path of Allah. Thus attaining sincere belief, piety and righteousness is the ultimate goal of the Islamic upbringing.



## The method of upbringing through the Quran

The Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) was once asked about the following verse in the Quran: “And whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam.” [The Holy Quran, Al-An’am: 125]. The companions asked: “How will Allah open a person’s heart?” The Messenger replied: “A light will be thrown in the heart that will lead to clearness and openness.” So they next asked: “Is there any sign to indicate that?” The Messenger (pbuh) then said: “Attaching the heart to the hereafter, and drifting away from this life, and preparing for death before facing it.” (Narrated by Abdulrazaq and Ibn Abi Hatim).

Allah said as well: “But Allah has endeared the Faith to you and has beautified it in your hearts.” [The Holy Quran, Al-Hujurat: 7]. Anas Ibn Malik relayed that the Messenger (pbuh) frequently said “Islam can be seen publicly and belief is in the heart,” and then pointing to his chest, he exclaimed three times: “taqwa is here, taqwa is here, taqwa is here.” (taqwa: piety; a love for Allah and a fear of displeasing Him) (Narrated by Imam Ahmad). Allah (swt) also said: “Those! They are the rightly guided ones.” [The Holy Quran, Al-Hujurat: 7]. Allah (swt) thus meant that

those who possess taqwa are the ones who are rightly guided and raised by His Book.

Therefore, the crucial questions are: How can one reach this level of taqwa and be among the rightly guided ones using the Book of Allah? How can one know what is asked of the Believers? How can one be among the people of favor and blessing as Allah said: “This is a Grace from Allah and His Favour.” [The Holy Quran, Al-Hujurat: 8]

We will attempt, in the next few pages, to bring to light how we can be among those who are blessed, and follow the method of Quranic upbringing.

First and foremost, we have to sincerely believe with the utmost certainty that this Book, the Quran, is from Allah (swt). We have to really comprehend and appreciate what it means to have Allah's Book in our hands. We have to understand the greatness of the words that Gabriel descended with and delivered to the heart of the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh); the words that illuminated the whole world and the entire universe. Then we have to live with this Truth the way Allah described in His book: “This is the book, wherein there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Al-Mutaqun [the pious and righteous].” [The Holy Quran, Al-Baqarah: 2]

Next, we have to approach this Book in a holistic way. The Quran is a Book full of blessings, a cure for ailments, a Book of knowledge and wisdom, a Book of fine literature and unmatched rhetoric, a Book that presents the true stories of previous generations and a Book that helps the believers accumulate good deeds. Truly, it is a book for all of that, but the problem here is that we must not limit our perception about this Book to those partial aspects. If we do so, we will be deprived from its true content and we will miss its true intent and we will be unable to perform our true duties and reach our goals. Indeed, the Quran is a comprehensive book that presents a method of Tarbiyah and upbringing; it is a complete system for the entirety of life. It is a message to all of mankind that must be put into practice until the end of time on earth.

This holistic view of the Quran directly connects with recognizing its goals. These goals are:

1. Guiding each individual and all of mankind to Allah.
2. Forming an Islamic character that is balanced and nourished.
3. Forming an Islamic society that consists of Muslim individuals who are raised and nurtured by the Quranic principles.
4. Leading and guiding the Islamic nation in its battle with the enemies of Allah and the individuals of Jahiliyah by shedding light on

those enemies and their conspiracies, thereby properly establishing Jihad in the path of Allah.

Having knowledge about all of these points should lead us to enter and live in the wide world of the Quran where we can fully receive and assimilate its messages with our whole being. This will result in a living Quran that is active and wise; a Quran that is a leader, a nurturer and a guide.



## How to engage with the Book of Allah

In order to understand and comprehend the Quran and receive its light and achieve the desired high moral level, we have to learn the aims of the Quran and learn to motivate and shape our emotions and hearts with its teachings. Thus we must translate this wise Book into real life, and also teach others around us to live together with this Book. Abu Bakr always cried when he read the Quran, so much so that he would be unable to complete a single surah or chapter. Omar as well as the other companions of the Messenger (pbuh) developed marks underneath their eyes due to the number of times that they would cry in the middle of the night. We have to rise to this level of emotional interaction with the Quran and not

merely remain at the level of theoretical understanding, or even remain at the level of simply acknowledging that this is a great Book.

This level cannot be reached unless we cleanse our souls from the contaminants that include negligence, misdemeanors, vanity, temptations from Satan and the various and meaningless matters that we are often consumed in. Our hearts have to be cleansed so that they may receive and absorb the Quran; they must be purified in order for the Quran to find its place in our hearts.

The more one reads the Quran and interacts with it, the more he becomes amazed at how it exposes and clarifies many issues, big or small, psychological or materialistic. Truly, it sheds light on everything. This should be expected, as the Quran is a Book from the Creator and is a guide to the correct path. Since it is the final message from Allah, the Quran contains all that human kind needs to fix their lives and establish the proper relationship with Allah, the Believers, the societies, and the rest of the universe.

The Quran is a complete source of nourishment, leading us to learn from its words, stories and laws so that we may be elevated to be true slaves of Allah. The Quran came to address the reality that we face which

is full of disagreements, incidents, challenging events, pain, good as well as evil. The Quran came to teach us and to elevate this reality.

We have to be eager to contemplate on the text of the Quran. This contemplation provides energy and enlightens the vision of any alert and interactive reader.



The Quran is the pure source from which the balanced Muslim develops

The Quran is a pure spring that nourishes and creates a balanced Muslim, equipped with true facts, concepts and ethics. All of this education and upbringing can only take place if the reader of the text approaches the world of the Quran with a completely open mind, void of any preconceived ideas, especially the philosophical ideas that have been produced by mankind throughout the ages in which they were distanced from the Divine guidance. It is of the utmost importance to realize that there can be no other sources of knowledge, intellectual constructs or philosophical ideas to evaluate the Book of Allah. The Book of Allah, the Quran, stands alone, and it is the ultimate source of guidance, and thus we should only receive our ideas from the Book of Allah.

The Quran was revealed to establish the correct beliefs, facts and concepts upon which a sound ideology for mankind can be built, as Allah (swt) knows best how mankind should live. Therefore, mankind has to receive all of this foundation comprehensively, without preconceptions or influence from Jahiliyah in order for them to be able to establish a clear ideology and a wholesome way of life. This approach and methodology in dealing with the Quran will help us benefit from it and acquire its treasures.

The reader of the Quran has to approach it with the attitude that it is the utmost Truth, good and guidance. Approaching the Quran with complete trust, satisfaction and submission is the only correct way in dealing with it.

The Quran is characterized by eliciting deep and unique inspiration, and guiding to the true path. Along with that, the Quran is capable of providing its readers with the warmest sensations; however, these treasures are only infused in the hearts and souls of the Believers. Individuals who have oblivious hearts will be prohibited from gaining its treasures. So the reader of the Quran has to stimulate his heart and interact with the Quran in the correct way and seek the assistance of trustworthy scholars of Quranic interpretation who have mentioned some of its treasures.

We must attempt to approach the Quran in the same way that the companions of Muhammad (pbuh) previously did. This first luminous and Muslim generation is a spectacular example for us to learn how to benefit from and interact with the Quran. Their devoted and sincere approach to the Quran is an indication of how they felt in the presence of Allah (swt) and how they eagerly expected and waited for the revelation of verses to guide them in specific situations and incidences in their very lives. So let us follow their example and apply what we learn from their interaction with the Quran in order to gain some of its benefits.

We must realize that the Quranic text is free from the boundaries of time and place. The Quran was not revealed for a past era, nor was it revealed for a specific nation or people. Indeed, the Quran is a suitable guide to all people, in any location, or any era, no matter what their educational, social or technological levels are.

To realize the validity of the previous point, we only need to see how the companions of the Messenger (pbuh) lived with and applied the Quran, and then the generations who followed them, as well as the succeeding Muslims who have also been callers to the Truth. Its verses were true and applicable during all of those times as well as when societies

grew and advanced technologically. So let us approach the Quran as if it is being revealed to us now to solve our current problems and issues.

The verses of the Quran that teach us about Allah present His names and attributes. If the reader of the Quran comprehends and lives with these names and attributes, truly recognizing the Supremacy and Greatness of his Lord, then this will lead to finding the correct path and being steadfast on it. The verses will become alive to guide the reader in all aspects of life.

There are also verses in the Quran that tell stories. They talk about real people who faced real situations. Those verses describe people and analyze their emotions and problems and then present solutions. The Quranic stories present lessons and elaborate on the Islamic core belief, the matter of the Islamic advocacy, the Muslim society and the required Islamic upbringing. All of these lessons are essential in guiding us in the reality that we currently live.

If we want to understand how to achieve the aims of the Quran, we have to study the biography of the Messenger Muhammad (pbuh) as well as his companions in addition to the interpretation the Quran. We must not limit our study to the Quranic interpretations and explanations; rather, we must study how the Quran became a living example in the character of

the Messenger (pbuh), as well as how it became a living example in the lives of his companions. When Aisha, one of the wives of the Messenger (pbuh) was asked about the character of the Messenger (pbuh), she said: “His character was the Quran”. Indeed, she spoke the truth, for the character of the Messenger (pbuh) and his life truly were a practical example and interpretation of the Quran.



The reader’s sense that the Quranic narrative is personally directed to him

We mentioned this point earlier but we would like to further emphasize on it in this section:

Imam Al-Ghazali talked about the internal aspects that the reader has to be equipped with when reading the Quran. He wrote:

“The reader of the Quran has to realize that the commandments and prohibitions in the Quran are personally directed to him. If he reads an admonition, he must feel that it is directed to him. And if he reads stories about the past generations or previous Messengers, then he must know that they were not related for amusement, but rather, that he may take heed and learn a lesson from them. And if the Quranic text seems to

address all of mankind, it is in fact addressing each individual thus the reader must comprehend that he is the one being spoken to. Allah (swt) said (instructing the Messenger to say): “This Quran has been revealed to me that I may therewith warn you and whomsoever it may reach.” [The Holy Quran, Al-An’am: 19]. Muhamad Ibn Kaab Al-Qurthai said: ‘whoever received the Quran is as if Allah spoke to him.’ That is why many scholars have said that the Quran contains letters from Allah sent to us, so let us contemplate on them in our prayers (Salah) and apply them in our deeds (Ta'at & Sunnan).”

One should be motivated to write down his thoughts and reflections immediately after finishing reading the Quran, before getting distracted with the other daily life activities. These writings will help in continuing to live with those meanings and to remember those feelings and emotions that engulfed him in those moments.

In order for those feelings and emotions to be consistent with the aim of the Quran, the reader has to gain some basic knowledge about the interpretations of the Quranic text. This will assist the reader in understanding the Quran without being biased toward specific preconceived thoughts. Also, the reader has to gain some knowledge of

the Arabic language in order to be able to understand the linguistic eloquence of the Quran.

The reader of the Quran also has to free himself from being restricted to a specific generation's interpretation of the Quran, or a specific ideology, or a specific interpreter. However, one should overcome differences in opinions between interpreters and use what is suitable for his generation's reality. Returning to the Quran and making it our only source of true guidance, wisdom, and knowledge is the only way to rise in belief and certainty, and this is exactly the Quranic methodology for teaching and upbringing.

When approaching the book of Allah, the reader has to take organized, gradual, and balanced steps. For example, one must initially bring a spiritual atmosphere that will lead to a focused and deep contemplation of the Quran. One can then focus on specific emotional aspects and beautiful recitations of the Quran, and eventually integrate all aspects of his intellect and heart in interacting with the Quran. A Quranic dictionary should be used to understand specific terms whenever needed. Perhaps, commentaries such as Sayyed Qutb's book, "In the Shade of the Quran", can be utilized to help understand the Quranic meanings, texts and elaborations.

The reader has to pay attention to not mix between the matter of understanding the Quran and the ultimate aim of the Quran. Understanding the Quran is not the ultimate goal; rather, it is simply a means to reaching a level whereby one is able to truly contemplate on the Quran. Similarly, contemplating on the Quran is not the ultimate goal and purpose either; rather, that is simply a means to achieving the true and final purpose of the Quran which is to establish faith and piety, as well as to find a guidance that will form a believing individual who lives for and through the religion of Allah; an individual who endures all hardships for the sake of Allah.

This is how the companions of the Messenger (pbuh) reached that high pinnacle. They applied the Quranic methodology of upbringing. It is also a pinnacle that can be reached by any group of people if they sincerely utilize the Book of Allah in educating and upbringing their souls.

Indeed the Quran is the utmost blessing from Allah (swt). Hence, we are most thankful to Allah, the most Gracious and the Lord of the worlds.

