



Study Circle

The opportunity to learn, connect
and spiritually grow with your
family

WEEK 3

ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BRITAIN
PRESENTS

*A 30-day study
circle programme*

This pack consists of:

- A series of reminders
- Tafsirs on short surahs of the Quran
 - Attributes of God
- Short stories of the prophets (peace be upon them)

Version 1.0



The Islamic Society of Britain is a community based national charity. We are a membership organisation with members spread across the whole of the UK. Established in 1990, we were one of the first organisations that sought to evolve a uniquely British flavour to Islam. In order for this to happen, we felt that Muslims would have to think seriously about understanding their faith in a British context.

Our aims are:

- To promote greater understanding and awareness of Islam
- To organise, educate and enhance the development of British Muslim communities
- To encourage positive contribution to British society and the promotion of social justice



*The Islamic Society of Britain has four key areas of focus
over the coming two years:*

- Connecting families & building brotherhood/sisterhood*
- Developing youth and young adults*
- Encouraging social action*
- Developing and enhancing civic engagement*

Our youth section (11-17) is called Young Muslims

Our young adult (18-26) section is called Campus

Please do become a member or join our mailing list

isb.org.uk

isbcampus.org.uk

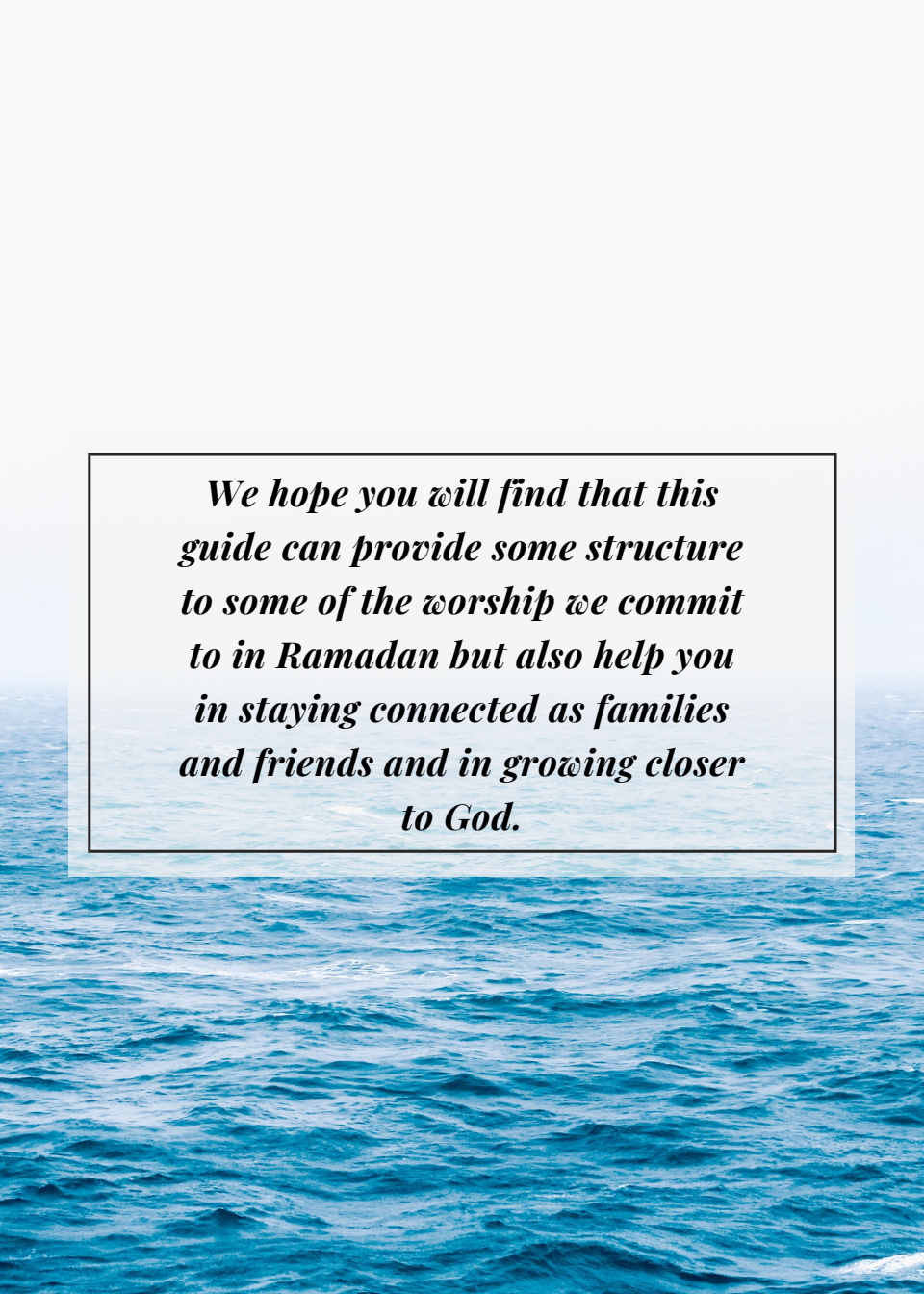
ymuk.net

info@isb.org.uk

0300 365 10 9 8

How to use this pack

- This resource has been created in order to allow families to come together during Ramadan and hold study circles.
- The purpose of this is to help bring families together in worship and remembrance of God in a constructive and aided way, especially at a time when it is difficult for us to be together as families and friends, and in places of worship.
- This resource can be used as an aid or as a comprehensive guide. No prior level of knowledge is required. You may use the information provided as little or as much as you feel necessary, at your own discretion.
- We would suggest that families sit together regularly, every day during Ramadan to do the circle in order to benefit from it. Set a fixed time every day if you can!
- The circle is designed to take 30 minutes. This can of course be extended to suit interests and circumstances.
- We would encourage families to take their circles with wider family or friends through the use of online interfaces. This will bring together families regularly in worship and the remembrance of God.
- This pack contains the content for Week 3. To obtain the next pack please visit isb.org.uk. For your ease, each day is divided into three sections. These include the following; Quran, a story with a message from Islam, a reminder or reflection and a summary of one of the 99 names of God.



We hope you will find that this guide can provide some structure to some of the worship we commit to in Ramadan but also help you in staying connected as families and friends and in growing closer to God.

Glossary

- Hadith*** Refers to reports of what Prophet Muhammad said and did (literally: statements or news)
- Islam*** Has two meanings intertwined: 'peace' and to 'give one's will to God'
- Pbuh*** Peace be upon him. When used for Muhammad, it means 'peace and blessings be upon him'
- Quran*** The Muslim scripture (literally: recitation)
- Ramadan*** The 9th month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims observe fasting
- Salah*** Ritual prayer, alone or in a group (literally: link or communication)
- Sawm*** The act of fasting. The fast begins before sunrise and ends at sunset each day
- Sunnah*** The practice and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (literally: trodden path)

Surah A chapter of the Quran (literally: divider)

Ṣwa Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, meaning May He be praised and exalted

Tafsir Commentary of the Quran

Zakat A charitable contribution of 2.5% of wealth donated to the poor and needy (literally: purification)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 15

Surah Baqarah Ayah 185: Tafsir

Reminder 1: Spirituality and empathy

Reminder 2: Responsibility

Surah Baqarah Ayah 185 Tafsir

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ
وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ
فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ
أُخْرَىٰ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَانَكُمْ
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“The month of Ramadan [is that] in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance for people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So, whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let them fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify God for that [to] which God has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful.”

Quran (2:185)

What is significant about the order of the first two sentences in this verse?

- Ramadan is associated with the Quran first before the text makes mention of fasting.
- This makes it a special time for us to do our utmost in listening, reciting, studying, reflecting and memorising the Quran.
- The Prophet used to revise the Quran with Angel Jibrail every year in the month of Ramadan - and in the last year of his life they recited twice.

"God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" How can we see this in practice in our religion?

A surface-level meaning is that God intends for us ease in our fasting. However, it is also a characteristic of Islam's general approach to difficult situations. Whatever we are asked to do is for our benefit.

But we are not asked to do anything in Islam that is beyond our capabilities. If there is some hardship, then there is also a concession. So, the more difficult things become, the more important it becomes for us to focus on God's love for us and the flexibility which God has provided.

From many examples in the Seerah, we know of the importance of ease within Islam.

- For example, the Prophet said: "The most blessed of your religion is the easiest of it."
- Aisha said: "the Prophet never had two choices except that he chose the easier of them, as long as the shariah was not infringed, and there was no haram done."

- One of the five main principles of Islamic jurisprudence is that ‘difficulty begets ease’.

This beautiful religion is not designed to be so challenging that it becomes difficult to follow.

The verse ends by remarking, “...perhaps you will be grateful.”.

When we carefully consider the wisdom and purpose of this verse, we are reminded that the unique aspect of fasting is to become God conscious, to increase our connection with God – to increase in taqwa. Worship is an intrinsic element in drawing close to our Creator: it is through worship such as remembrance that we enable our heart, mind, body and soul to feel an increasingly deeper connection with the Source. In addition, we can choose to reflect on God’s creation, increase our gratitude for the blessings we have (particularly during this pandemic) and focus on the gifts before us.

God says, “If you give thanks, I will give you more” (Quran 14:7) which can encourage us to increase our appreciation, deep awareness and thankfulness for all that we have because we love God. This can bring us strength and comfort at the best and worst of times. May it help us all in some small or significant way as we move through this blessed month.

Reminder 1: Spirituality and empathy

Ramadan is a fundamental pillar of Islam and its foundation traces back through many faiths and traditions, for example, the Quran mentions it was prescribed for nations before us. This month is special due to its connection with spirituality (coming closer to God). Spirituality is what every soul longs for, a longing to know the Creator and feel God's very existence. This spiritual awakening can bring us closer to ourselves, which God tells us is key in understanding our relationship with God.

During the day we are asked to refrain from food, water and carnal desires, all for the sake of God – an exercise set by God, like no other. This is to calm our addictive natures. The side effect of this denial of desires as an act of worship, is that we begin to physically feel hunger and deprivation, and that our minds are focused on the things that really matter in the world. This changes how we view the world, and life in general; like how we view those who are less fortunate, the hungry and the destitute. It appears that one consequence of this attempt to grow in spirituality is to grow in empathy – to feel for God's creatures, a trait loved by God.

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Anxious is he about what you suffer; full of concern for you [is he, and] full of compassion and mercy towards the believers.”

Quran (9:128)

Here, in effect, God, the Almighty is praising the quality of empathy in the Prophet – his ability to feel the pain of others. And there is no better example than the Prophet. Empathy and spirituality are thus intrinsically intertwined. For us to feel empathy is to have a noble characteristic that connects us to the Prophet. And to have even a small fraction of the principled character of Prophet Muhammad is something special indeed.

Socially, what does this do for us?

Showing empathy improves our relationships and develops our character as a Muslim – it moulds us to become more compassionate and caring to ourselves and those around us. When we show someone that we are trying to understand them, it brings instant comfort to that person and makes us feel good, too.

It is no wonder that people involved in today's caring industry – from psychologists to social workers to chaplains – place such a high value on the skill of 'feeling empathy'. Research has shown that empathy brings about growth in people, and lack of empathy actually makes them feel worse!

Ramadan is about trying to gain in spirituality – coming closer to God through sacrifice and good actions. Empathy brings real life emotion into our often hard hearts. It breathes life into our sinful souls. It creates tears for others that weigh very heavily in the Sight of God.

Reminder 2: Responsibility

Islam can be said to exhibit itself in two primary forms: the outward manifestation, pertaining to rituals or a legal framework, and the inward reality, which shapes and impacts the way people feel. These ‘wings of faith’ present a series of progressive, nurturing, challenges that embrace the hearts and minds of Muslims from all walks of life.

Extending from domestic and familial responsibilities right through to communal and global concerns, Muslims are taught to reflect on how they can best serve their families, community and the world around them. Whilst levels of religious observance varies amongst every faith community, the credence that these responsibilities have in ones life can be said to ultimately stem from the internal blossoming of one’s faith.

As a Muslim grapples with the challenges of maintaining a morally and spiritually upright life we can begin to see how a grounding in Islam correlates with a greater sense of personal, communal and even global responsibility.

“Let there be a community among you who call to good, promote the right, and prevent the wrong. They are the ones who have success”

(Quran, 3:104)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 16

Reminder: The Resilient Muslim

Duas for patience through struggle

Reminder 2: Peace

Reminder: The Resilient Muslim

We begin with two verses from Surah Al-Sharh, where God states:

“So verily, with every difficulty there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.”

Quran (Surah Al-Sharh, 94:5-6)

Resilience is not just about the ability to ‘bounce back’, but also the capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances. Equipped with all the courage we can muster, and the knowledge that any difficulties we are currently facing will not last forever, we can get through our hardships in the best way possible and find relief. As Muslims, belief and trust in God is integral to this process as we are constantly reminded that all good, as well as all trials, ultimately come from God.

“But perhaps you hate something although it is good for you; and perhaps you love something although it is bad for you. God Knows, while you know not.”

Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:216)

There is a story mentioned in the Quran of a man who owned two beautiful gardens. The man was exceptionally proud of the state of his gardens, which were a clear display of his wealth and success. As a result, he began to take the success

given to him by God as his own. Yet, as the seasons changed, the man's garden fell into disrepair, and the man was devastated. He had grown used to his beautiful gardens, but as his flowers died, he had failed to recognise that both the initial beauty of his gardens, as well as their subsequent devastation, was decreed by God. As a result, the man's companion said to him:

“If only, when you entered your garden, you had said, “This is God’s will. There is no power not [given] by God.”

Quran (Surah Al-Kahf, 18:39)

It is important to be grateful and have patience through both the blessings as well as the trials we face; both are from God and are integral in our journey through this life to the next. God has told us:

“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but we give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return’”.

Quran (Al-Baqarah, 2:155-156)

Being patient and persevering in times of hardship is an extremely difficult thing to do, and this is acknowledged by God. It is important to accept that we are human, we feel strongly and sometimes our emotions get the better of us.

In the story of Maryam (pbuh) and her delivery of the Prophet Isa (pbuh), God says:

“And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten”.

Quran (Surah Maryam, 19:23)

Yet, God responds to her pain and helplessness with mercy, assurance, and love:

“...do not grieve; your Lord has provided beneath you a stream. And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop upon you ripe, fresh dates. So eat and drink, and be contented”.

Quran (Surah Maryam, 19:24-26)

God knows our weaknesses as humans and so has given us opportunities to strengthen ourselves through Him. He asks for us to adhere to the Five Pillars, testing ourselves so that we may be stronger for the future. Of the five – the Shahadah, Ramadan, Zakat, Hajj and Salah – three in particular help us to maintain mental strength through faith in God.

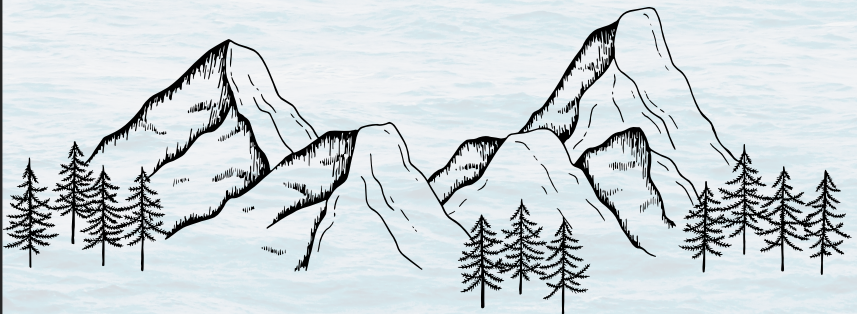
Salah teaches us to focus on a connection with God, regardless of what may be happening in our day-to-day lives. Ramadan teaches us the benefits of restraint, and also shows us our own strength, and the pilgrimage of Hajj is an

immense journey that teaches us to overcome obstacles by combining those tests.

Our way of life, Islam, gives us countless opportunities to build up our strength and countless ways to use our ability to overcome hardship.

"...Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest."

Quran (Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:28)



Duas for patience through struggle

There are many duas God has given us to recite when in times of hardship. Below are a selection that can remind us of the strength of God and, indeed, of ourselves through Him.

1) As a reminder to the self:

اللَّهُمَّ لَا سَهْلَ إِلَّا مَا جَعَلْتَهُ سَهْلًا ، وَأَنْتَ تَجْعَلُ الْحَزْنَ إِذَا شِئْتَ سَهْلًا

"O God, there is no ease except in that which You have made easy, and You make the difficult easy, if You wish."

(Ibn Hibban, Book 24, Hadith 27)

حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

"Sufficient for me is God; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne."

Quran (Surah At-Tawbah, 9:129)

2) Supplication in times of distress:

أَنْي مَسِيْنِ الصُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِيْنَ

"Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful."

Quran (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:83)

اللَّهُمَّ رَحْمَتَكَ أَرْجُو فَلَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ، وَأَصْلِحْ لِي شَأْنِي
كُلَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ.

“O God, it is Your mercy that I hope for, so do not leave me in charge of my affairs even for a blink of an eye and rectify for me all of my affairs. None has the right to be worshipped except You.”

(Abu Dawood, Book 43, Hadith 318)

3) To ask for help:

أَنَا مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

“Indeed, I am overpowered, so help me.”

Quran (Surah Al-Qamar, 54:10)

رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

“My Lord, I am in need of whatever good you send down to me.”

Quran (Surah Al-Qasas, 28:24)

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أَجْزِنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

“We belong to God and to Him shall we return; O God, reward me for my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange for it.”

(Muslim, Book 11, Hadith 5)

رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَقَّفْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ

“Our Lord! Pour out on us patience and constancy and take our souls unto you as Muslims [in submission to you].”

Quran (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:126)

4) To seek refuge:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ، وَالْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ، وَالْجُبْنِ
وَالْبُخْلِ، وَصَلَعِ الدَّيْنِ، وَغَلَبَةِ الرِّجَالِ

“O God, I take refuge in You from anxiety and sorrow, weakness and laziness, miserliness and cowardice, the burden of debts and from being over-powered by men.”

(Bukhari, Book 80, Hadith 66)

Reminder 2: Peace

“O God, You are the original source of Peace; from You is all Peace, and to You returns all Peace. So, make us live with Peace; and let us enter paradise: the House of Peace. Blessed be You, our Lord, to whom belongs all Majesty and Honour!”
(Prophet’s daily prayer)

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root word for ‘peace’. The notion of Peace in Islam is without bounds and faith in this encourages Muslims to seek the path of peace: “God guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace...”
(Quran, 5:16).

To emphasise the importance of living in peace, when Muslims greet one another they say assalamu alaikum which means ‘peace be upon you’ to those that they know and do not know and this is a constant reminder of Islam’s teachings – that we must live in harmony by spreading love and compassion.

The concept of peace in Islam is not just limited to Muslims but is a right for all humanity. According to this faith the best way of obtaining peace is to be at peace with yourself, which is attained by leading a reflective and spiritual life. It is also important to be at peace with those around you – being good to your neighbour, treating people with respect, maintaining ties of kinship and looking after the needy and oppressed. These are only some of the responsibilities and duties that are an integral part of Islam, the path of peace.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 17

Reminder 1: God is Great

Reminder 2: God Consciousness

99 Names of God: Al-Baseer

Reminder 1: God is Great

“When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when they call on Me: Let them also, with a will, listen to my call, and believe in Me: That they may walk in the right way.”

Quran (2:186)

Our Creator is All-Knowing, Wise, Knower of the Finest Subtleties. And God loves us, God is the Most-Compassionate, God does care and is anxious over our wellbeing. So, the Prophet was told to remind us that God’s vastness, greatness and loftiness must be remembered alongside other attributes which God tells us of. God is near to us and listens to our every word, our every prayer and request and mention of God and all of creation. We know, for example, in times of joy and distress, God is closer to us than our jugular vein. God knows what lies in our hearts and minds and so we can take strength from knowing that God is deeply connected to who we are as whole human beings.

So let us make mention of God and bear in mind that when we pray, God is listening to us lovingly and we must always remain hopeful that God will respond to our heart-felt prayers.

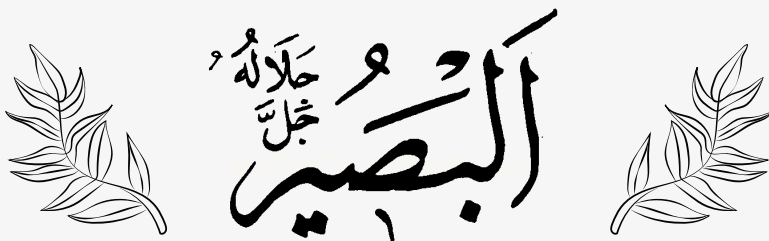
Reminder 2: God Consciousness

God consciousness (taqwa) is a familiar term which has been taught to us through the Quran and Hadith. Being aware of God throughout your day is highlighted as being an important trait of a believer. The literal translation of the Arabic word taqwa is ‘forbearance, fear and abstinence’ and therefore communicates not only the remembrance of God, but also the remembrance of God’s teachings and power.

God consciousness has been defined by scholars as ‘the experience of awe’ of God but also encompasses a ‘high state of heart, which keeps one conscious of God’s presence and knowledge’, thereby being used as a tool to ensure we strive to stay on the straight path. Being God conscious can include obvious things like praying on time, fasting during Ramadan and actively avoiding behaviours that have been forbidden to us. However, it is also an inward journey full of spirituality which makes each of our journeys unique.

The word taqwa is used in the Quran over 100 times, which in itself shows how important it is to our faith. The Quran guides us on how to cultivate taqwa in our lives, through virtues such as truthfulness (wafa) and patience (sabr). Having taqwa will not only make your life in the hereafter successful, but also make your life on Earth blessed. Through constant reminders of God, you can learn to be a kinder, softer and a more grateful person as well as someone who is Muslim in practice.

99 Names of God: Al-Baseer



Al-Baseer *The All Seeing*

Al-Baseer comes from the root 'b-s-r' which has the connotations of 'seeing and noticing', 'understanding and knowing', and 'having awareness of something'. God is the One who sees and understands all that has gone and all that will come, and God sees both what is apparent and what is hidden.

God says in the Quran that "God is with you wherever you are, and God sees whatever you do." Quran (57:4) [for more details](#)

Al-Baseer knows every visible thing and to God the truth is apparent. God knows what we conceal in our hearts, and the things we do that no one else sees. When we realise that God is Al-Baseer, we are disciplined, and we are careful in what we do, for God knows that what we try to hide.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 18

Surah Ash-Sharh: Tafsir

Story: Prophet Nuh (pbuh)

Reminder: Your forgiveness will bring you forgiveness

Surah Ash-Sharh (The Relief)

*“Did We not expand for you, [O
Muhammad], your breast?*

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ

And We removed from you your burden

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ

Which had weighed upon your back

الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ

And raised high for you your repute.

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ

For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

*So, when you have finished [your duties],
then stand up [for worship].*

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ

And to your Lord direct [your] longing.”

وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَأَنْعَبْ

Quran (94:1-8)

Surah Ash-Shahr Tafsir

This is an early Makkan chapter, closely related to the chapter Ad- Duha in that it offers comfort to our Beloved Messenger. Some companions indeed recited these two chapters together without the Bismillah in between. Imagine the comfort and solace the Prophet would have felt on hearing both chapters revealed to him directly by his Lord at a time of difficulty and struggle.

By illuminating his heart, God inspires us to carefully consider the value of a heart which is able to expand and constrict. For example, in chapter 6, verse 125, God illustrates the expanded heart and the constricted heart so that we can further understand the role of our hearts in our journeys: “Whomever God wills to guide, God opens their heart to Islam. But whomever God wills to leave astray, God makes their chest tight and constricted as if it were climbing up into the sky.”

Verse two talks about the weight of Prophethood which was heavy indeed. It is said that the Messenger would visibly sag on receiving revelation. If on a camel, the camel would sag, as if heavier. A companion reported that whilst sitting next to the Prophet with his thigh against his, Muhammad’s thigh became heavy against him as revelation was received. This indeed is the very message that would have led to the mountains crumbling.

God lifted this weight by inspiring the heart of the Prophet with light and divine inspiration and removing any ignorance.

Verses three and four draw our attention to the honour bestowed upon the name of Muhammad. In every call to prayer that rings across every nation, Muhammad's name is celebrated. In every prayer across the world, Muhammad is mentioned and prayers and blessings are sent upon him. His name is praised in Scriptures before the Quran.

“Indeed, We have given you (O Muhammad), a clear conquest that God may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete God's favour upon you and guide you to a straight path” - Quran (48:2)

“Indeed, God confers blessing upon the Prophet, and God's angels (are asked by God to do so). O you who have believed, ask (God to confer) blessings upon him and ask (God to grant him) peace.” -
Quran (33:56)

What a noble and elevated position the Beloved has!

Verses five and six explore the idea that with every difficulty comes ease. Here, God comforts the Prophet that with every difficulty there is ease, if we show beautiful patience.

This verse is then repeated, perhaps to emphasise the message or because, as some scholars say there will be one ease in this life and one in the next for every difficulty.

Verses seven and eight bring the Prophet's focus back to worship. So, when Muhammad had finished with his tasks, God advises him to devote himself to God in worship. To God should he turn his attention and his hopes. Once the jobs of the day and the voluntary actions had been completed, the Messenger of God should turn in prayer to God, especially with his voluntary night prayers.

Story: Prophet Nuh (pbuh)

Prophet Nuh (pbuh), who is also known as Noah, is said to have lived around ten generations after the Prophet Adam (pbuh). His life can teach us many lessons, particularly in terms of resilience. He faced many tribulations but had the strength to overcome them and to prosper.

For many generations, the people of Nuh had been worshipping idols. Nuh was thereby sent to guide them to worship God alone. He remained persistent in spreading the truth, despite only having a few followers, who were amongst the poor. The idol worshippers continued to reject his message and said:

“We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion.”

Quran (Surah Hud, 11:27)

This ostracisation of Nuh is something that many of us can relate to today. It can be easy to feel like the ‘black sheep’ when following Islam in today’s society. However, it is important that we take inspiration from the likes of Nuh, and we must also remember that all of our efforts are being recorded. Impressing God is more important than impressing people: your status may seem low in this life, but you are dignified and elevated in front of God.

Despite Nuh's numerous efforts, the people continued to disbelieve in God. The people of Nuh would constantly try to humiliate him and even challenged him by saying:

“So bring us what you threaten us, if you should be of the truthful.”

Quran (Surah Hud, 11:32)

And so God thereby instructed Nuh to build an ark so that he would be protected from God's punishment against them (which would take the form of a flood). During its construction, the disbelievers persisted in their wrongdoings and continued to mock him. However, Prophet Nuh (pbuh) remained resilient in obeying God despite the consistent hardships placed upon him by his community. Remembering our end goal is what should push us in situations like this, where it seems like the whole world wants us to fail.

Prophet Nuh (pbuh) was instructed to bring together all of the believers and a pair of each animal to be protected by the ark. After some time, God sent the flood. Nuh's wife and one of his sons refused to join him on the ark and disbelieved in the message of God. The Quran describes how Nuh's son said:

“I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water.’ [Noah] said, “There is no protector today from the decree of God, except for whom He gives mercy.’ And the waves came between them, and he was among the drowned.”

Quran (Surah Hud, 11:43)

As Nuh and the other believers listened to God's command, they survived and continued life as normal once the flood had subsided. Often, it's easy to fall into the habits of our peers - their good practices, but also their bad ones. This is particularly true in terms of following one's family and cultural traditions over the Quran. However, it is important that we, like Nuh, think for ourselves and follow the truth. It may be uncomfortable to do things differently to those around us; however, they won't be the one answering for us on Judgement Day.

Like Nuh, we should obey God and at the same time try our best to advise our peers towards goodness as well. Yes, it might be a lonely road and God will provide us with many, many tests along the way: God knows this, and so reassures us:

“And the weighing [of deeds] on that Day will be the truth. So those whose measure [of good deeds] are heavy - it is they who will be the successful.”

Quran (Surah Al-A'raf, 7:8)

Discussion Points:

- Do parts of Islam contradict the values of 'mainstream' society?
- If so, how can we approach these challenges?

Reminder 2: Your forgiveness will bring you forgiveness

It is our duty to go through Ramadan positively, as much as we can. To do that we need to address all the factors that may possibly be a reason or a barrier against us gaining the pleasure of God.

During the first ten days we may have taken the time to make amends with anyone we feel we may have wronged or upset. This includes family members who we don't often speak to, friends, neighbours and associates. We need to seek forgiveness from anyone we've treated wrongly. This is a very difficult thing to do; for most of us, our pride or raw emotion will get in the way. But it is an act that is beloved to God. One of the most beautiful internal convictions, that is healthy for both our mind and soul, is not to harbour any ill feelings in our hearts against someone; this is the pinnacle of good attitude and one that will only bring us closer to God, the Almighty.

Abdullah ibn Amr narrates that the Messenger of God said: "The merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy by the One who is above the heavens. The womb is named after the Most Merciful, so whoever maintains the ties of kinship, God maintains a tie to them, and whoever severs them, God severs him".

(Tirmidhi)

Today a particular individual may be in our lives and tomorrow they are not, and the same can be said for us. Waiting is not really an option. We want to reach out to people while they are still here, otherwise it impacts our hearts for a long time.

Imagine the people who we may have upset or hurt with our actions or words and never sought forgiveness. Some of them may have taken that hurt to the grave, erasing our chance to talk to them.

Let us use this blessed month to reach out and ask for forgiveness for the wrong we may have done to others. And every night before we rest our heads on our pillows to sleep, we should try to forgive all those who may have wronged us. This is a characteristic that will lead us to Paradise, and one that is extremely healthy and uplifting for our mental wellbeing and spiritual health.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 19

Reminder: Prophet Ayub (pbuh)

Reminder 2: Paradise

99 Names of God: Al-Muizz

Story: Prophet Ayub (pbuh)

Each and every individual faces difficulties and hardships, but it is our patience that leads to the rewards and mercy of God. The beauty of patience lies within enduring calamities, and it is a virtue that we, as Muslims, can develop by drawing upon examples from the Quran.

The story of Prophet Ayub (pbuh) is an ideal example of the afflicted believer who remained patient and faithful to his Lord. He was known to be a man of wealth who possessed treasures of gold and silver and owned land, farms, fields and cattle. He had a large family with many children.

At the age of 70, his body became afflicted with many different diseases so that none of his body parts were free from difficulty except for his heart and his tongue, which he used for the remembrance of God. Ayub was devoted to the worship of God: he remembered God during the night and day, in both morning and evening.

His illness only grew worse, to the point that all of his friends and relatives parted with him - all except his wife. She tended to him, nursed him and ensured she was always displaying acts of kindness towards him. Ayub's wife remained patient with him through the loss of their children and property, as well as their struggles with finances. She took on the responsibility of working in the village to earn a livelihood with which she could feed herself and her husband.

May God bless her and be pleased with her.

Never did Ayub grow angry or reject the fate which God decreed upon him. Instead, he remained patient, calm and steadfast in his worship. After realizing the physical toll his situation had taken on his wife, Ayub raised his hands and supplicated to God, without complaining to anyone else. Making supplication (dua) does not contradict the idea of being patient at all: a believer is encouraged to make supplication to God, but is also instructed to be wary of complaining and grumbling to people.

‘Remember Ayub, when he cried to his Lord, “Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”’

Quran (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:83)

After turning to God, calling fervently upon Him and supplicating, without becoming disgruntled or dissatisfied with God’s decree, Ayub’s call was answered. God directed Ayub to drink from and bathe in a cool spring. He was cured and his body was healed.

‘[So he was told], “Strike [the ground] with your foot; this is a [spring for a] cool bath and drink.”’

Quran (Surah Saad, 38:42)

From this story, we can reflect on the trials and tribulations we face in our own lives, and ensure we are able to remain patient and sincere in our worship. We should use our difficulties as a means to grow closer to God.

Discussion Points:

There are so many examples of sabr (patience) in the Quran. Thinking about the ones that you know of, which one resonates with you the most? Why?

Reminder: Paradise

Prophet (pbuh) said: 'When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of heaven are opened, and the gates of hell are closed, and the devils are chained'.

(Bukhari)

This is a month flowing with blessings!

Have you wondered why it is so easy to fast in Ramadan, why it is so easy to do good deeds and why committing sins is harder? We all have an inner voice that whisper inclinations to us but God wishes to make our lives that bit easier by chaining them up for us.

The gates of heaven are open, and so many people will be rewarded with paradise this month. The gates of hell are closed, and so many people will have been saved from it this month.



99 Names of God: Ar-Muizz (The Honourer)



المُعِزُّ



‘Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than the believers: do they seek honour from them? Surely all honour belongs to God.’

Quran (Surah An-Nisa, 4:139)

Al-Muizz stems from the Arabic root ‘-z-z’ which has the classical Arabic connotations of being ‘mighty, strong and powerful’, ‘elevated and noble’, ‘honourable’, ‘invincible’, ‘respected and cherished’, and ‘precious’. The name Al-Aziz also stems from the same root, meaning the mighty, who subdues and is never subdued. Muizz is the opposite of ‘mudhill’ - the ‘dishonourer’. Muizz is similar to, but much more intensive and glorious than ‘Rafi’ (uplifter). Linguistically, ‘ma’azza’ the noun, derived from the verb ‘yu’izz’ means power, strength and might. Al-Muizz conveys the meaning of the one who honours whomever He pleases from amongst His servants. He is the one who empowers the prophets by protecting them, granting them victory and raising their status among their people. He honours the ones who obey Him whatever their status, colour or background.

Al-Muizz is the one who gives invincible strength and honour. He makes it possible for someone or something to be respected, cherished and mighty. The Almighty places one who persists in praising His name at the centre of honour, instilling love and respect for Him in people's hearts.

Imam Zayn al-Abidin is quoted to have said, "If one desires to be honoured even though his tribe is not distinguished, or to be held in high esteem, even though he has no authority, or to be a man whose wealth does not diminish, he should get out of the humiliation of disobedience and enter into the honour of obeying his Lord".

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 20

Reminder 1: People of Taqwa

Reminder 2: Whose call are we going to answer?

Reminder 3: Hope

Reminder 1: People of Taqwa

'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become people of taqwa (the pious).'

Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:183)

In this verse, God clarifies the purpose of fasting - to gain taqwa (God-consciousness). How does Ramadan train us to become God-conscious? Perhaps because, for a whole month, day after day, we hold back from bodily desires so that every time we think, 'Oh, I really would like a drink or a chocolate', we suddenly remember that even though we could sneak into a cupboard and have a quick nibble of something, we are fasting for God and He is watching us, and even if nobody else knows we are eating, yet He is well-aware of our every action.

In addition, we are constantly on the lookout to do good and help people because it will be rewarded many times over. Anger is another 'desire' - it is an impulse that suddenly comes to us, and again we remember God, and remember that we will diminish our fast if we abuse someone or get angry or hurt someone with our words or actions. This constant reminder that God watches, and the process of being careful to not displease Him can gradually, over the space of a month, strengthen us in taqwa.

Reminder 2: Whose call are we going to answer?

Do we love our sleep? I am guessing we all do – I suppose it's called 'beauty sleep' for a reason! Can we put a price or value on our sleep? Ramadan in the spring and summer months brings us long days and short nights. When our suhoor (meal before we begin our fast) is only a few hours after the iftar (meal to end our fast) of the previous day – sleep becomes even more precious! Many of us are exhausted by fasting during Ramadan, and it can be difficult to motivate ourselves to wake up at night to pray and worship.

However, let us remind ourselves about the amazing benefits of sacrificing some sleep during the night:

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Messenger (pbuh) said: 'Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains, and He says: "Who will call me that I might answer him; who will ask of me that I might give to him; who will ask my forgiveness, that I might forgive him?"'

(Bukhari & Muslim)

God tests people in this world in different ways, and there really is no doubt that we are all going through some form of a test right now. Our tests come in different shapes and sizes, sometimes there are many and sometimes few. Have we ever thought of why this happens and what God, the Most Merciful, wants from all of this?

Perhaps our trials are the very thing that keeps us close to God. We can reflect on the trials that many prophets went through.

The above hadith reminds us that God is looking out for us so that He might console us, give to us, and forgive us. We are being asked to make a small sacrifice in the process to meet with God, the Lord of the Worlds. Let us ask ourselves if our sleep is worth more than conversing with God, and having our prayers answered? So to ask the question again: how much is our sleep worth? Whose call will we answer, the call of our warm beds or the call of God in the depth of the night?

Reminder 3: Hope

‘There are those in the month of Ramadan, in every day and night, to whom God grants freedom from the fire, and there is for every Muslim a supplication which they can make and will be granted.’

(Ahmed)

The Prophet (pbuh) reassures us with such hope here. There are many people who are given what they want every day and every night of this especially blessed and holy month. May God keep our tongues moist with His remembrance and with humble supplications, asking from Him, so that He may grant our requests. Ameen!

It is easy to remember to pray for ourselves. The following is a suggestion of all the other people we can pray for:

O God, we pray that you forgive and bless all the people that are worshipping you in these special days, and also our parents and family, those who are with us, those who have passed away before us, all those who have helped us and benefitted us, all those who have asked anything of us, who have asked us to pray for them. We ask for your healing, mercy, forgiveness and love as we think about those who have been affected by the pandemic this world is enduring, Guide humanity, bring light and peace to the hearts of all people.

We pray for all of your creation, especially for the weak, the oppressed, the poor and indigent; for the orphans and the distressed, for the hungry and homeless, for the sad, the lonely and the ill. O God, help all of these people to be raised out of their suffering: shower them with your mercy, for you are Al-Arham-ur-Rahimeen – the most compassionate of those who show compassion. Ameen

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Day 21

Reminder 1: Forgiveness

Reminder 2: Moral Code & Character

99 Names of God: Dhul Jalali Wal Ikram

Reminder 1: Forgiveness

Narrated by Abu Huraira: I heard God's Messenger saying regarding Ramadan, 'Whoever prayed at night in it (the month of Ramadan) out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from God, then all their previous sins will be forgiven'.

(Bukhari)

We often lose sight of how immeasurable the rewards for good deeds are in this wonderful month. To have your slate of ill-deeds wiped clean for just one night's prayer is difficult to comprehend, yet this is what Muhammad confirmed.

The condition for a night prayer being accepted in this way is that it must be offered with sincere faith and in expectation of reward from God – so it must be a genuine communication with God. That will be difficult if you do not know the meaning of your prayer, so it would be wise to learn the meaning of at least the key parts of the prayer and then engage your mind on what you are reading as you pray.

A night prayer is classified as any extra prayer, called a *nafl* prayer, performed at some point between the obligatory *Isha* and *Fajr* prayers.

May God accept our efforts in this holy month and gift us with His good pleasure and complete forgiveness. Ameen.

Reminder 2: Moral Code & Character

We all know that only God is the judge of our actions in this temporary life. So why is it that we are quick to judge each other? We often form an opinion and judge others by their appearance – it could be their dress, hairstyle, skin colour or just the way they speak. How fair is it for us to criticise someone else when we are full of faults ourselves? Let us spend more time with the reflection we see in the mirror. Let us examine and evaluate, critique and analyse what we have become. Ask ourselves the question: does my character reflect the prophetic example? Ramadan is an amazing opportunity for change, a time to break the cycle of conscious or subconscious bias and cynicism. It is a time to search our souls and bring out the good that we are all capable of.

It is an expectation in general, that the ritual practices undertaken during the blessed month of Ramadan are meant to purify one's soul and heart from thoughts and deeds which are contrary to Islamic teachings. For example, by removing material desires, one is able to focus more on adoration and service to God. We are expected to go beyond the physical ritual of fasting and attempt to decontaminate and purge ourselves of impure thoughts and motivations such as anger, backbiting, cursing, and greed. While the physical effort of fasting might make us feel weak in our bodies, we should remember that our souls are benefitting from our efforts.

It is narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr that the Messenger of God (pbuh) said: The best of you are those who possess the best of manners.

(Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith reminds us of what truly matters when we compare ourselves with others. So if we want to compete, then let us compete to be the best in the eyes of our beloved Prophet (pbuh).

Aisha narrates that she heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) say: A believer with good manners and a good moral disposition gets the same reward as the one who fasts (permanently) and spends the nights in prayer.

(Abu Dawud)

This is not to say that rituals are not important – they are crucial. This hadith demonstrates the great emphasis that has been placed on good manners and good morals. These obligatory rituals should lead to an improvement in our morals and manners.

99 Names of God: Dhul Jalaali Wal Ikram
(Possessor of Glory & Honour)



المُعِزُّ



‘Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than the believers: do they seek honour from them? Surely all honour belongs to God’

Qur’an (Surah An-Nisa, 4:139)

This name of God is a beautiful Arabic phrase and begins with a pronoun followed by attributes of God;

- Dhū (pronounced thoo) - Lord of, Possessor of
- L: the
- Jalaal: Majesty, Glory
- Wa: and
- l: the
- Ikraam: Generosity and Bounty

‘Jalaali’ originates from the root ‘j-l-l’ which connotes to be supremely great, majestic, sublime and independent. ‘Ikram’ stems from the root ‘k-r-m’ which connotes to be generous, honoured, highly esteemed, rare and bountiful. ‘Al-Jalil’ and ‘Al-Karim’ are also derived from the same roots. The words ‘jalal’ (glory) and ‘ikram’ (generosity) are verbal nouns whilst

‘jalil’ (glorious) and ‘karim’ (generous) are adjectives. The demonstrative pronoun Dhu literally means ‘with’, ‘in’, ‘on’, or ‘of’, but in this phrase, it is translated as Lord of, owner of or possessor of.

God is the lord of these two beautiful attributes. God is most honoured, and He is the source of all generosity, bounty and blessings. In Surah Ar-Rahman, God says, ‘Blessed is the name of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour’.



Thank you for engaging with our content, we hope it was thought-provoking and will act as the beginning of both further discussion and your own research!

The Islamic Society of Britain is a volunteer-led organisation, committed to enhancing family, youth and young adult development through social engagement and civic action, based upon a platform of helping to develop a just and caring society. We are a membership organisation, so please do join us, volunteer for us or help us in whatever way you can, small or large. There is so much need in our society at present, so help us to make the difference! All details can be found on our website: www.isb.org.uk

There has been a small team that has developed this Study Circle Pack with many different contributors to the content. The aim of this pack is to help families and friends to connect and share some time together whilst learning and reflecting on our faith. If you have noticed any errors or have any feedback, please do send them to us at info@isb.org.uk.