

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

APPENDIX D: A SIMPLIFIED AND PRACTICAL METHODOLOGY OF LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND THE QUR'AN

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَّكِرٍ

"And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember (and receive admonition)?" [Al-Qur'an, 54:17].

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

"(This is) a Book (the Qur'an) which We have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over its messages, and that men of understanding may receive admonition"
[Al-Qur'an, 38:29].

عَنْ عُثْمَانَ بْنِ عَفَّانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: "خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ" رَوَاهُ
الْبُخَارِيُّ

Uthman ibn 'Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: *"The best among you are those who have learnt the Qur'an and teach it (to others)"*
[Bukhari].

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ:

وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ، يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ، إِلَّا نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
السَّكِينَةُ، وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ، وَحَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ، وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ (رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *" No people gather together in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, without tranquility descending upon them, Mercy (of Allah) enveloping them, the angels surrounding them, and Allah making mention of them amongst those who are with Him"*
[Muslim].

Learning to understand the book of Allah is of the utmost importance after having received basic education. We have emphasized the importance of *hifz* and have consequently seen miracles in terms of young children memorizing the entire Qur'an. However, understanding the Qur'an, which is one of the most important rights of the Qur'an, has not been given due attention. One can find numerous verses asking us to ponder over Allah's Word, not just understand it. InshaAllah, if

proper attention is given to the actual understanding of the Qur'an, similar miracles will be evidenced.

The methodology of learning presented below enables the reader to understand the meaning and the message of the Qur'an while reciting it in Arabic. In this methodology, the primary focus is on the vocabulary. In principle, if you take out those words which occur repeatedly, the total number of words in the Qur'an may well be around 2000!!! Allah Subhanahu wa ta'aala has revealed His book which contains such a small number of words. This is another miracle of the Qur'an.

Three approaches of learning have been outlined below. Any one of these can be used depending on individual circumstances of the student. Approaches B and C have been implemented very successfully in different places. More and more people were attracted because of the simplicity and practicality of these approaches. These approaches need not be strictly adhered to and can be altered according to one's preferences and/or practical experiences. The only prerequisite here is that one should be able to recite the Qur'an.

A. INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

For those who want to study the Qur'an by themselves, the following approach is suggested.

1. In the beginning, spend some time on Appendix B. It may be emphasized here that you need not master this appendix to proceed further.
2. Start from the beginning of the Qur'an, i.e., from Surah Al-Fateha.
3. Go page by page or Ruku by Ruku or whatever part of the Qur'an you are comfortable with. Initially you may need more time for understanding a page or Ruku. However, as you progress, you will be able to do better because the number of new words in each part (Juz') decrease drastically.
4. For each part (a) memorize the meanings of new words (it is highly recommended to use "The Easy Dictionary of the Qur'an" / Vocabulary Cards) ; (b) read the boxed translation and try to connect the Arabic verse with its meanings; and (c) check and correct your understanding of the verse with the translation provided on the left column.

Once you start understanding the Qur'an, you will feel a huge difference in terms of your attachment with the Qur'an.

B. GROUP APPROACH

In this approach, a group of people decides to learn the book of Allah together. In addition to the steps followed in the individual approach, the following will benefit the participants:

1. **Reminder:** The first five minutes of the class could be used for discussing reminders based on the Qur'an and Hadith. It should be remembered that mere learning of the language and acquiring self satisfaction that we have learned the Arabic of the Qur'an would not be sufficient for true guidance, unless it is followed by living the Qur'an by reciting it daily and trying to implement its commandments.
2. **Previous Session Review:** A review of the previous class may be conducted. This may take another five minutes. This review not only reinforces the students' learning process but also establishes the continuity of the verses to be covered in the current session.
3. **The Main Part:**
 - One of the participants recites the first verse or just a part of it. He then reads each word and its meaning. After this, he reads the verse again with the translation of the whole verse (or the part which he had recited).
 - The next participant continues from where the first left off. The process is continued until all the participants have taken their turns. Consequently, a section or a number of verses are covered in one session.
4. **Summary:** In the last five minutes of the class, the group conducts a review of what was covered in the present session.
5. **Homework -1:** The participants are strongly encouraged to carry the vocabulary cards corresponding to the section or verses being studied with them all the time. Everyday, till the next class, they spend just a minute or two to scan over the card(s) and try to memorize the meanings of new words written on the cards. This makes the whole learning process of memorizing the meanings of new words and more importantly, *retaining, remembering, and living the message of the Qur'an* very efficient and effective. These cards are presently being prepared and will be printed soon and/or published on the Internet InshaAllah. If cards are not available, 'The Easy Dictionary of Qur'an' by Shaikh Abdul Kareem Parekh can be used as an alternative.
6. **Homework -2:** Each participant is asked to memorize the meanings of the next section (or the verses) to be covered in the next class.

C. TEACHER-AIDED APPROACH

1. TEACHING TOOLS

1. Two white (or black) boards with erasable color markers. One board is used for writing a verse or part of it along with the meaning of every word right below it while the other board is used for practicing basic Arabic grammar.
2. Posters displaying basic grammar tables (provided in Appendix B).

2. SYLLABUS ITEMS

1. Word-for-word translation of the Qur'an.
2. The Easy Dictionary of the Qur'an (if available).
3. Vocabulary cards (if available): Each card should contain the words and their meanings of about one page or whatever part you are comfortable with, either a Ruku or its half.

3. SUGGESTED RULES OF TEACHING

The teacher should try his best to live the Qur'an by (i) trying to complete the plain recitation of the whole Qur'an within a month, and (ii) following its commandments in his day-to-day life. It is his sincerity, his trust in Allah, and his consistent effort that will enable him to receive Allah's help in performing this task effectively.

1. **Reminder:** The first five minutes of the class could be used for giving general reminders based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Special attention should be given to daily recitation of the Qur'an. It should be duly emphasized that mere learning of the Qur'an is not enough, unless it is followed by living the Qur'an by reciting it daily and trying to practice it.
2. **Simple grammar:** Brief and basic grammar could be covered in the next five minutes. In each class, the teacher selects a commonly occurring verb in the Qur'an and repeats the grammar table (see Appendix C) for that verb. In order to make the class interactive, each student is asked to repeat at least two verbal forms.
3. **Previous Class Review:** After this, a review of the previous class may be conducted. This may take another five minutes. The teacher asks all students to listen to him. He then recites verses that were covered in the last class. He stops at each verse or part of a verse and asks the meanings of important words. This review not only reinforces the students' learning process but also establishes the continuity of the verses to be covered in the current session.
4. **The Main Part:** The teacher writes the first verse or a part of it on the board. If he is unable to write the full verse, he writes the important words of that verse.
 - The first student sitting on the teacher's right side recites the first verse or just a part of it. He then reads each word and its meaning. After this, he reads the verse again with the translation of the whole verse (or the part which he had recited).
 - The teacher repeats the whole verse word by word along with its meaning. This repetition helps the students reinforce the meanings in their mind. He emphasizes the meanings of certain words and shows their link to the various forms on the grammar chart, wherever appropriate.
 - The teacher may take three to four minutes to explain the meanings of that verse.

The next student continues from where the first left off. For each verse, the teacher may write the whole or part of the it on the board. The process is continued until all the students have taken their turns. Consequently, a Ruku or a number of verses are covered in one session.

5. **Summary:** In the last five minutes of the class, the teacher recites the whole Ruku again. He stops at every new word that is covered in the session. This exercise further enhances the retention of the meanings of the new words.
6. **Homework -1:** The teacher distributes vocabulary cards, if possible. The students are strongly encouraged to carry these cards with them all the time. Everyday, till the next class, they spend just a minute or two to scan over the card(s) and try to memorize the meanings of new words written on the cards. This makes the whole learning process of memorizing the meanings of new words and more importantly, *retaining, remembering, and living with the message of the Qur'an* very efficient and effective. These cards are presently being prepared and will be printed soon and/or published on the Internet Insha'Allah. If cards are not available, 'The Easy Dictionary of Qur'an' by Shaikh Abdul Kareem Parekh can be used as an alternative.
7. **Homework -2:** The student is asked to memorize the meanings of the next Ruku (or the verses) to be covered in the next class.

5. ADDITIONAL TEACHING GUIDELINES

1. Students are shown a number of times a word which has been used repeatedly in the Qur'an. This can be done especially for commonly occurring words. For example, the prepositions لِ , مِنْ , بِ , فِي , عَلَى , and إِلَى , have occurred 3656, 3221, 2538, 1692, 1439, and 737 times, respectively! A teacher may look up in the famous Qur'an Index *المُعْجَمُ الْمُفْهَرَسُ لِأَلْفَاظِ الْقُرْآنِ الْكَرِيمِ* to find for himself the number of times a word and its derivatives have been used in the Qur'an. Two examples of many are: قَالَ and its different forms (around 1700 times); and كَانَ and its different forms (around 1300 times). This information is a great encouragement to students. They return home with a feeling of having learnt the meanings of a number of words in the Qur'an in just one session.
2. The student fixes a black/white board near the dining table or any other prominent place in his home. Everyday, he writes just one line or a part of a verse for his family. Such a practice will benefit him in numerous ways.
 - He learns much faster and better, as the best way to learn is to teach.
 - He gets his family members involved effectively in this process, thereby fulfilling a part of the responsibility of being a good *ra'ee* (caretaker) of the family.
 - This is a simple learning process for his family too! It is extremely easy for every family member to devote five minutes and discuss that small part of the verse at some suitable time during the day, preferably when all the family members are together.
 - Further, he prepares himself to become an effective teacher in the future.

3. For a couple of sessions in the beginning, the teacher covers the last ten or fifteen Surahs of the Qur'an and those prayers which are recited in the *Salah*. This not only helps one understand what one reads everyday but also enhances the student's appreciation of Arabic sentence structure. Furthermore, through these Surahs, he memorizes many words commonly occurring in the Qur'an. This gives him a smooth start for studying the Qur'an in depth. In our daily prayers and *azkar*, we recite around 200 words and 50 sentences. There are spiritual advantages too. The student develops a stronger relationship with Allah, His Messenger, His Book, and pious brethren.
4. In every class, the students are reminded of the importance of this learning process with the help of the Qur'anic verses and Ahadith. Thus, their interest is retained throughout the course.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

"As for those who strive hard in Us (Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths" [Al-Qur'an 29: 69].

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم: يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ إِذَا ذَكَرَنِي، فَإِنْ ذَكَرَنِي فِي نَفْسِهِ، ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي نَفْسِي. وَإِنْ ذَكَرَنِي فِي مَلَأٍ ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي مَلَأٍ خَيْرٍ مِنْهُمْ، وَإِنْ تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ بِشِبْرٍ، تَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ ذِرَاعًا، وَإِنْ تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ ذِرَاعًا، تَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ بَاعًا، وَإِنْ أَتَانِي يَمْشِي، أَتَيْتُهُ هَرْوَلَةً. (رواه البخاري والترمذي ومسلم وابن ماجه)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *Allah the Almighty says:*

I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than his. And if he draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's length; and if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length (the length of two hands stretched apart), and if he comes to Me walking, I rush towards him.

[Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah].

6. SECRETS OF SUCCESS OF THIS APPROACH

I. Involvement of everybody present in the class/group:

Remember the famous saying:

*Tell me & I forget;
Show me & I remember;
Involve me & I learn!*

In this method, every effort is made to involve each student/participant in the class/group.

II. Less Brainwork:

Researchers contend that the brain does not learn the two-way translation automatically, if it is just taught. Translating words and/or sentences from English to Arabic involves extra cerebral effort. Consequently, in this method, the teacher asks the meanings of the Arabic verses and words and never vice versa. The objective of the course is not to make the students speakers of Arabic language. That stage is eventually reached when they finish the entire Qur'an and gain enough vocabulary.

III. Using Almost all the Means of Memorization:

1. **Seeing:** Looking at the words and their meanings on the board. The teacher should write the whole verse or at least new words in the verse on the board.
2. **Listening:** Hearing the words and their meanings repeated by other participants in the class and by the teacher.
3. **Saying:** Saying the words loudly at one's turn as well as when they are being repeated by the whole class.
4. **Remembering it within a context:** The teacher provides the context of new word(s) in the class through discussion. For example, while reciting Surah **الْفِيلِ** (the elephant), if the student remembers the meaning of just one word, **فِيلٌ**, the whole story of Abraha will come to his mind instantly (if he had heard it from a teacher). Further, once the story is there in his mind, it will help him remember the meanings of some of those words in the Surah which he might have forgotten, such as **طَيْرٌ** , **حِجَارَةٌ** .
5. **Anchoring:** Relating the new word(s) to other commonly known words. For example, the teacher can help link the word, **نَعْبُدُ** with the word **عِبَادَةٌ** .
6. **Repeating:** Referring to the meaning again and again at the dining table or from the index card kept in the pocket. A very famous linguistic expert and writer of the book, "How to learn a foreign language" says that the index card is a very efficient means of memorizing the meanings of new words.
7. **Teaching:** The students should make every effort to teach the material to others, however little it might be. Remember the famous saying: *The best way to learn a subject is to teach it to others.* One can start teaching without any hesitation at least at his home. Alternatively, just two or three friends in the neighborhood will suffice. In addition to his learning, the teacher also fulfills his basic duty of guiding everybody who is under his control and influence.

8. **Listening to audio tape:** The audio tape consists of the recording in the class or a professionally developed version of the class. A student listens to the audio tape while in the car or while doing any physical activity at home. Women too can listen to the tape while performing household chores.

IV. Minimum Grammar:

Grammar is taught in the first five minutes of each session with the help of the two charts given in Appendix C. A part of the charts could be covered in each session. The teacher helps the students reproduce the second chart with different verbs.

Natural Way: It should be remembered that one has to develop vocabulary **before** learning grammar for the following reasons:

- A child first learns words and then starts linking them together. We speak our mother tongue fluently without ever learning the grammatical rules. We learn it by repeatedly listening to our elders.
- Learning grammar before improving vocabulary is like putting the cart before the horse. Or it is like learning different styles of swimming by moving hands in the air inside a swimming pool without water. One has to fill the swimming pool with water (i.e., increase word power) and then learn to swim (i.e., to connect the words with grammatical rules).

No dual and feminine gender forms in the beginning: It is of little use teaching verbal forms and pronouns of feminine gender or dual in the beginning of the course since they are not frequently used in the Qur'an.

V. Learning Arabic Directly from the Qur'an:

In these classes, the objective of the proposed method is not to teach the students how to write or speak the Arabic language. It is just to enable them understand the message of the Qur'an while reciting it. Consequently, from the first class itself, the Qur'an is used for teaching.

- The famous Hadith, "The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it" is very relevant to this approach.
- There is a greater reward for learning through this method. For example, one does not get any reward for the letters of this sentence: هَذَا دُكَّانٌ فَآكِهِانِيٌّ. However, if he practices learning Arabic from " هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ " (a part of verse 3:51), he gets a reward for reciting each letter!
- Non-Qur'anic words are not taught unless they are different forms of Qur'anic words; thus, the student is able to link and remember the meanings of the Qur'anic words easily. For example, in the sentence هَذَا دُكَّانٌ فَآكِهِانِيٌّ, دُكَّانٌ and فَآكِهِانِيٌّ are not Qur'anic words. Hence, for a beginner, it is least beneficial to teach Qur'anic Arabic using such sentences.

HOW TO INVITE PEOPLE TO THIS COURSE

Muslims have divided themselves into many groups, parties, and organizations. Yet, all read the same Arabic Qur'an. Let us maximize that point of unity. Consequently, this course can be entitled: "Understanding the Qur'an".

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS:

*"By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour;
By the Moon as she follows him;
By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory;
By the Night as it conceals it;
By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure;
By the Earth and its (wide) expanse;
By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;
And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-
Truly he succeeds that purifies it,
And he fails that corrupts it!"*
[Al-Qur'an 91:1-10].

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا * وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّاهَا *
وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا * وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا *
وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا * وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا *
وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا * فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا
وَتَقْوَاهَا * قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا * وَقَدْ خَلَبَ
مَنْ دَسَّاهَا *

Anyone who aspires to total success, and is afraid of failure in the life of this world and in the life hereafter, should ponder over the Quranic verses mentioned above.

The Creation of the Almighty is without flaws or imperfections. Everything in this universe is functioning within the limits defined by its Creator. Only man is prone to adopt a course not approved by his Creator. Although the freedom of choice is granted by Allah Himself to test every human being, the one who choose wrongly will suffer the consequences.

Allah is the Most Merciful towards His wonderful creation, i.e., man. He has promised Paradise for those who shall act according to the code of conduct fixed by Him. This code has been bestowed for the guidance throughout the human history. The final edition of this code is the Qur'an which is revealed in Arabic. Since this is the final edition, He has taken the responsibility to preserve it.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)."

[Al-Qur'an, 15:9].

It is for our own benefit, rather betterment of our life, to be acquainted with the Guidance. If one desires to know the subject matter of the Message of his Creator, he can get it through any of the translations of the Qur'an. But it is not the same as understanding the Qur'an directly from the

Arabic text. One should try his best to learn the original language of the Qur'an. It will inshaAllah be very easy because Allah himself has promised:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

"And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember (and receive admonition)?" [Al-Qur'an, 54:17].