

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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The GIFT of Meditation

God advocates meditation in several places in the Quran. It is a wonderful way to worship Him reverently and feel close to Him. Since God gives us so much freedom in our worship, believers can meditate in whatever way they enjoy it. However, some verses indicate a more focused and 'reflective' form of worship (particularly at night and dawn), such as making frequent prostrations, seeking God's mercy etc. (3:17, 25:64, 26:217-220, 51:18, 73:2-6.)

[17:79] During the night, you shall meditate for extra credit, that your Lord may raise you to an honorable rank.

[39:9] Is it not better to be one of those who meditate in the night, prostrating and staying up, being aware of the Hereafter, and seeking the mercy of their Lord?...

When intending to meditate upon God, it is not always easy to just get started off or stay focused for long. But ever since I realized that it is something God wants us to do for our benefit, I have found that we can improve on it if we work at it. It may not be easy to manage well everyday, especially when we are alone or tired at night or dawn. Our Most Merciful God knows this (73:20), but we should definitely try and do the best we can. Undoubtedly, a quiet personal session of worship and meditation upon God brings about a great sense of calm, peace and security. It is truly an enhanced way to reflect upon and praise His glory, express our concerns with Him and request His help, be honest with ourselves and ask forgiveness for our sins, and thank Him for all the blessings He showers upon us.

One typical dawn, I again found myself struggling with my concentration and not really being reverent in worship. Instead of consciously glorifying God before sunrise and seeking His forgiveness - which could actually help me kick start a great day (20:130), my mind was preoccupied with planning for the material things that needed to be done in the day ahead. I tried to convince myself that this was okay because it was just Satan trying to prevent me from fulfilling my obligations to God; and that this happened to all other believers; and that God understands the situation. Fortunately, God made me realize that His commands are a sacred duty (33:38) and that He would never ask us to do anything that was not doable - provided we try (2:185).

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GIFT

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Therefore, for my own good, it was important that I just try harder and do a better job of meditation.

I began to think of what could help me comfortably settle into an earnest meditation session, just like I seemed to have no problem finding efficient solutions for other things in the day. Quickly, God reminded me that the practical way to approach tasks was to make a work plan or agenda and move through it step by step. Similarly, if I made a list of things I could meditate on or about, God willing I could do a better job since there was a goal in place and an appropriate plan to work with.

So once the 'strategy' was decided, listing the points in the agenda was next. While thinking about what to put in the meditation agenda, I thought about what a great and priceless GIFT Submission was to us from God. In fact, by His grace, it soon showed me that the word GIFT itself contained the answer I was looking for, as each letter in it seemed to represent an aspect I could use for meditation! So here is what I figured I would currently make as my agenda for meditation. Note that this is only a personal list of aspects I try and fulfill during meditation. It is not all-inclusive, and it will be great to have other believers share similar ideas so we can keep improving ourselves God willing.

G stands for the command to Glorify God

[20:130] Therefore, be patient in the face of their utterances, and praise and glorify your Lord before sunrise and before sunset. And during the night glorify Him, as well as at both ends of the day, that you may be happy.

[30:17] Therefore, you shall glorify GOD when you retire at night, and when you rise in the morning.

[30:18] All praise is due to Him in the heavens and the earth, throughout the evening, as well as in the middle of your day.

Next comes I for Implore God

God is the Only Provider (spiritual and material), so we must implore Him for anything and everything – His mercy, grace, guidance, provisions, forgiveness, help, solutions, victories, steadfastness, protection from Satan, protection from falling in sin, relief of problems/adversities/worries ...

[40:60] Your Lord says, "Implore Me, and I will respond to you. Surely, those who are too arrogant to worship Me will enter Gehenna, forcibly."

[2:186] When My servants ask you about Me, I am always near. I answer their prayers when they pray to Me. The people shall respond to Me and believe in Me, in order to be guided.

Then we have F for seek Forgiveness from God

Believers must remember that we are here because of God's mercy and we cannot be redeemed unless He forgives us. Therefore, we must keep killing the ego and develop a habit of frequently asking for forgiveness.

[11:90] "You shall implore your Lord for forgiveness, then repent to Him. My Lord is Most Merciful, Kind."

[40:55] Therefore, be patient, for GOD's promise is true, and ask forgiveness for your sin, and glorify and praise your Lord night and day.

[47:19] You shall know that: "There is no other god beside GOD," and ask forgiveness of your

sins and the sins of all believing men and women. GOD is fully aware of your decisions and your ultimate destiny.

[110:3] You shall glorify and praise your Lord, and implore Him for forgiveness. He is the Redeemer.

Cannot forget T for Thank You God

At any given time, God is showering us with great bounties for our enjoyment and opportunities to be redeemed. So it is but natural that we must show our appreciation and thank Him.

[2:152] You shall remember Me, that I may remember you, and be thankful to Me; do not be unappreciative.

[14:7] Your Lord has decreed: "The more you thank Me, the more I give you." But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe.

Lastly, I wish to remind believers that in the Quranic sense, meditation means meditation on God and His attributes, marvels etc. It is an active process that involves thinking and being consciously aware of God. Some people confuse other mediation techniques such as making the mind go blank (for apparent relaxation) with meditating or reflecting upon God.

[7:205] You shall remember your Lord within yourself, publicly, privately, and quietly, day and night; do not be unaware.

Kais R.

[This article is based on some personal tips for Meditation shared by Br. Kais at the August 2004 Tucson conference. His original article with more sample verses to reflect on can be accessed at www.masjiduntucson.org site. Similar ideas and suggestions are always welcome. Ed.]

Strategy For An UPbeat Day

Wake Up...Appreciate God's blessings. Everyday is filled with gifts of opportunity from God.

This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. – Psalms 118:24

Therefore, you shall glorify God when you retire at night, and when you rise in the morning. - Quran 30:17

Perk Up...Be ready and willing to do God's work.

Their sides readily forsake their beds, in order to worship their Lord, out of reverence and hope, and from our provisions to them, they give. – Quran 32:16

Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. – Psalms 34:14

Look Up...What God has to say in His scripture.

Read, in the name of your Lord, who created. – Quran 96:1

Seek from the book of the Lord, and read... – Isaiah 34:16

Reach Up...Trust God and His guidance.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path. – Proverbs 3:5-6

...When guidance comes to you from Me, those who follow My guidance will have no fear, nor will they grieve. – Quran 2:38

Stand Up...To be counted among the honorable and upright.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. – Psalms 84:11

O my son, you shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat). You shall advocate righteousness and forbid evil, and remain steadfast in the face of adversity. These are the most honorable traits. – Quran 31:17

Dress Up...In first-rate attire. Be in a righteous frame of mind.

O children of Adam, we have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But the best garment is the garment of righteousness. These are some of God's signs, that they may take heed. – Quran 7:26

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness... – Isaiah 61:10

Gear Up...With God's protection.

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. – Psalms 18:2

When the devil whispers to you any whisper, seek refuge in God; He is Hearer, Omniscient. – Quran 7:200

Give Up...Any stingy ways.

The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered. – Proverbs 11:25

[The righteous] who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. God loves the charitable. – Quran 3:134

Build Up...Your soul through good works.

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; – Matthew 6:20

Whoever disbelieves, disbelieves to the detriment of his own soul, while those who lead a righteous life, do so to strengthen and develop their own souls. – Quran 30:44

Shut Up...And think before speaking. Control the human nature in order to maintain righteousness.

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. – Psalms 34:13

The worshipers of the Most Gracious are those who tread the earth gently, and when the ignorant speak to them, they only utter peace. – Quran 25:63

Cheer Up...Others. What goes around comes around.

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. – Proverbs 16:24

Kind words and compassion are better than a charity that is followed by insult. God is Rich, Clement. – Quran 2:263

Check Up...Size up and evaluate what you have done.

O you who believe, you shall reverence God, and let every soul examine what it has sent ahead for tomorrow. You shall reverence God; God is fully Cognizant of everything you do. – Quran 59:18

Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord. – Lamentations 3:40

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Strategy

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Lift Up...Your thoughts through prayer and praise. Shift gears in your thinking as needed.

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. – Matthew 26:41 & Mark 14:38

You shall recite what is revealed to you of the scripture, and observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), for the Contact Prayers prohibit evil and vice. But the remembrance of God (through Salat) is the most important objective. God knows everything you do. – Quran 29:45

Straighten Up...Seek God's Forgiveness. Keep priorities straight.

You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous, – Quran 3:133

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. – Matthew 6:33

Stay Up...Hang in there.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 15:58

O you who believe, you shall be steadfast, you shall persevere, you shall be united, you shall observe God, that you may succeed. – Quran 3:200

Move Up...To a greater reward from God.

The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness gets a true reward. – Proverbs 11:18

As for those who repent, believe, and lead a righteous life, they will end up with the winners. – Quran 28:67

Donna A.

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