

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ، مَنْ عَلَيْنَا بِبُلُوغِ رَمَضَانَ، وَحَثَّنَا عَلَى الْإِنْفَاقِ فِيهِ
وَتِلَاوَةِ الْقُرْآنِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَنَبِيَّنَا
مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ، فَاللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ، وَمَنْ
تَبَعَ هَدْيَهُ بِإِحْسَانٍ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

All praises are due to Allah, the Possessor of Divine Majesty and Nobility. The One who has favoured us to partake of this blessed month of Ramadan. He has encouraged us to spend therein and to recite and contemplate the Qur'an. I testify that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah, the uniquely one who has no partners in His one-ness. And I testify that our Sayyid, our Prophet, Muhammad is the slave of Allah and His Messenger, may the peace and blessings upon him and upon whomsoever follows them in guidance until the Last Day.

What is the purpose of fasting? Practice patience, Feel for the poor, Learn self-control, Appreciate Allah's blessings, Increase spirituality, Connect with Quran, Follow the Sunnah, Become Healthy, Share food...

Yet, none of these are actually mentioned in the Quran or Sunnah as the *MAIN* purpose of fasting in Ramadan. These are all beautiful and healthy by products of Ramadan, which should be cherished and nourished.

It's fascinating that Allah talks about the fasting of Ramadan only *ONCE* in the Quran, in five verses of Surah Baqarah (2:183-187), where the *ONLY* purpose mentioned for fasting is *TAQWA*, building God-consciousness.

Interestingly, *THIS PURPOSE IS REPEATED TWICE*. Once in the first verse and second in the last verse of this segment.

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may achieve Taqwa” 2:183

“Thus does Allah make clear His ordinances to the people that they may achieve Taqwa” 2:187

Yet, we hardly hear people talk about achieving *Taqwa* as an objective or a priority in Ramadan.

Why is achieving Taqwa not the primary goal for many in Ramadan? *Taqwa* is usually talked about in theoretical terms. *Taqwa* is often insufficiently translated as just “fear of God” - *Taqwa* means to shield, and means to protect against something or to be cautious. It is inclusive of “consciousness of Allah”, “awareness of Allah”, “fear of Allah”, “righteousness” “piety” to Allah, caution,

Taqwa, is a transformative spiritual trait that involves propelling yourself to do what pleases God and repelling what displeases God.

“O Messenger of Allah, give me some advice.” He responded, “I advise you to have Taqwa, because it is the head (brain) of everything”

“Have Taqwa because it is the collection of all goodness (Khayr).”

“Taqwa is here,” the Prophet said pointing to his heart. Since you can’t “see” what is in your own heart, you can’t measure *Taqwa*. However, you can test the strength of your *Taqwa* based on your reactions & behaviour

5 ways to test your Taqwa –

- 1.** When you are alone and no one is watching you
- 2.** When no one is noticing or appreciating your good actions, personal or public.
- 3.** When you are in a company of bad people, physically or virtually
- 4.** When you are emotionally charged (upset, angry, insulted)
- 5.** When you are happy (excited, satisfied, praised)

In each of these scenarios, ask yourself: **Do you remember Allah and Allah's boundaries? Do you act in a way that you would be proud of telling family members about? Do you respect the rights of others? Do you feel remorse before, during, or after committing an act that Allah is displeased with in any of these situations? Do you continue to do good deeds regardless of people's acknowledgement or recognition?**

Answers to these questions will help you gauge how much work you have to strengthen your *Taqwa*. **How is your Taqwa tested in Ramadan 2021?**

1. Only Allah knows - Fasting tests your sincerity to Allah, as no one other than Allah truly knows if you are fasting, your intention behind fasting, and your actions during fasting. The element of showing off while being hungry and thirsty for 30 days is minimal. There is little to be gained from a worldly perspective from this fasting boot camp. **This is a true test of Taqwa.**

2. Only Allah rewards - Allah singles out fasting among all good actions in how and how much Allah rewards those who fast. **"Allah said: 'Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting; it is for Me and I shall reward for it...'"**

3. Allah has no need for it - Those who can't pass the *Taqwa* test in Ramadan while fasting, Allah has no concern for it. **"Whosoever does not abandon false speech & the acting upon it, Allah is not in need of them leaving off their food & drink"**

Taqwa, practically speaking, is about practicing willpower, which is your ability to resist temptation, to reform bad habits, and to revive good habits.

Resist. If there is one word you remember about *Taqwa*, this would be it. This is how you can *Taqwa* in action in Ramadan.

Resist talking too much and talking about meaningless affairs. Restrain tongue.

Resist overeating. Adopt a simpler Ramadan and ditch feasting at Iftar.

Resist social media. Curb your digital activity and go on a tech diet.

Resist negative thoughts and toxic relationships

Resist not prioritizing your physical health and fitness in Ramadan.

Resist laziness in exerting yourself in worship and spiritual devotion.

Resist procrastination in executing acts of *Sadaqa & volunteering*

Resist the temptation to belittle “small” sins.

Resist the habit of enjoying Ramadan by yourself or with your family only, while ignoring the needs of your neighbours as well as the single parents, the orphans, the seniors, the lonely, and those with special needs in your community.

Resist the delusion that your fasting or prayers or donations are enough to save you while ignoring the need to humble yourself, asking Allah for forgiveness –
Tawba