

Reading: The Foundation of Civilisation

First Sermon

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. The first word of His revelation was “Iqraa” (Read) and it was the one He commanded His prophet to recite. I bear witness that there is no deity save Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, who is the instructor of the first and last people. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Master Muhammad, his pure family, companions, and all those who follow them in righteousness till the Day of Judgment.

O Servants of Allah, I urge you and myself to obey Him, as He says, “**and fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is Knowing of all things**” (Al Baqarah: ٢٨٢).

Dear Muslims,

Reading is the key to knowledge and intellect and is the road to progress and welfare. A nation that reads is definitely in the lead. Therefore, reading in Islam is highly appreciated and encouraged. It enjoys a noble standing. It came as the first word in the first verse revealed: “**Recite in the name of your Lord who created**” (Al Alaq: ١). This verse was the first light that came from the sky to spread knowledge and eliminate darkness. It was mercy and blessing conferred by Allah upon His servants. The verse opened the doors to knowledge and sciences. The prophet pbuh sought to promote reading and writing amongst his community.

In the aftermath of Battle of Badr, ten Muslims were assigned to each prisoner of war to teach them writing and reading in return for his freedom. This is how Islam instilled passion for reading in the hearts of Muslims, who came to love reading greatly so much so that the book was loved by them more than eating and drinking. One of the scholars says: I am never done with reading books. If I see a book I haven't come across before, it is as if I found a treasure. Thus I will not exaggerate if I say that I have read or looked up ٢٠,٠٠٠ books or more.

Muslims were keen on having books with them, owning and carrying them in their travels. One of them advised his friend before travel, telling him to overcome the hardship of being away from home by reading books, for they have tongues that speak and eyes that can see.

Another person explained the benefits of a book by saying that it is the best property, the most precious beauty, the safest companion, the most pleasant friend.

O servants of Allah,

Readings has great benefits and profound impact. It is a means for science and knowledge. Through reading, people can acquire many ideas that inspire them towards development and innovation. A person who reads is a person who learns and gains the utmost benefit and understanding. Reading puts readers ahead of others. The prophet pbuh used to hold writers amongst his Companions in a higher position than their peers as was the case with Zaid ibn Thabit. He transcribed the Quran and used to translate letters and messages.

Reading nurtures also the mind and the heart. Each book has its own merit. Al Khalifa Al Maamun said, “it is a pleasure to look at the minds (he means books) of men.” Reading is one of the most important means to transfer knowledge, arts, accomplishments and innovations of the human mind. It expands readers' perceptions, giving them further insight, knowledge and wisdom. Also, it develops their skills and experiences and refines their manners.

Al Hasan Al Basri said, "when a man sought knowledge, it would not be long before it could be seen in his humbleness, his sight, upon his tongue, in his prayer, in his speech and in his disinterest (zuhd) in worldly allurements". Readers are influenced by what they read about the biographies of the righteous and the achievements of the hard workers. As a result, their level of enthusiasm and hard work are increased and their will is boosted.

Ibn Mubarak was once told: "O Abu Abdul Rahman, if you go out and sit with your friends." He said, "if I was at home I would sit with the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad." He meant reading books. Thus anyone who would like to be in the company of a scholar, thinker, or inventor, all they have to do is reading their books, because they contain the gist of their knowledge. Every person can choose the books that interest him and think they will benefit him. Imam Malik was asked: "What is your opinion about seeking knowledge?" He said, "It is a good thing, but stick to the one necessary to you."

O Worshipers,

The best book to read is the Quran. The Almighty says, "**so recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran**" (Al Muzzammil: ٢٠). The Messenger of Allah pbuh said, "recite the Quran, for on the Day of Resurrection it will come as an intercessor for those who recite it".

Indeed, Quran is the wise text, the clear light, and the straight path. It has the news about those before us and those who will come after us. It is also beneficial to read the Sunnah of our Prophet pbuh, being a source of inspiration that sets an example to follow. Allah says, "**there has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern**" (Al Ahzab: ٢١).

Reading books on the UAE, its history and founders are highly recommended for they instil in us the love for our homeland, strengthen our will to sacrifice for it, appreciate its achievements, maintain its acquisitions, and continue the process of its development and building of its civilisation, while armed with knowledge.

Other important readings include various references that are indispensable to people's lives as well as heritage books, for they are valuable to us. They were passed on to us by our ancestors. These books represent the essence of their minds over many centuries and the fruits of their hard work over long periods of time.

Please know that our language is Arabic. It is the language of a life that we live. Through it, we express ourselves in different situations. As such, preserving our language is a national, religious and ethical responsibility.

O Students,

Please continue working hard and read arduously and with passion. Start your day brightly, seeking help from Allah. Indeed, whoever relies upon Allah, He shall make their path easier.

O Parents,

Please be aware that the foundation for raising children and nurturing their minds starts at home. We should then instil the love for reading in our children by encouraging them to benefit from their time in reading. We should also provide them with the environment conducive to helping them achieve that. Further, we need to pray for them to achieve success and have good guidance in their lives. The Exalted is He says, "**and those who say, "Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and**

offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous" (Al Furqan: ٧٤).

Bearing this in mind, O Allah teach us what is beneficial for us, and make us profit from what You have taught us. O Allah, please guide us all to obey You, obey Your Messenger Muhammad pbuh, and obey whoever You commanded us to obey in line with Your orders, **“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you” (An-Nisaa: ٥٩).**

May Allah direct us all to the blessings of the Glorious Quran and the Sunna of His Messenger pbuh and benefit us all in whatever is in them.

I say this and ask Allah the Great, the Most Honoured for forgiveness for me, you and all the Muslims for every sin, so invoke Him for forgiveness, for He is the most Forgiving, the most Merciful.

Second Sermon

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. I bear witness that there is no god to be worshiped but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, peace and blessings be upon our Master Muhammad, his pure family, companions, and all those who will follow them in righteousness till the Day of Judgment.

O Servants of Allah,

Please be aware that you are asked to obey Him, the Almighty, as it ought to be by observing Him in private and in public and know that we have a long and bright history brimming with a tradition of reading, knowledge, culture and civilisation. It is rich with precious books and literature.

From this perspective, our wise leaders have built schools and universities and established scientific councils and libraries. They have provided means for beneficial reading, for example, by establishing annual book fairs.

In this regard, as part of our wise leadership’s interest in advancing knowledge and progress, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, launched the largest Arab project to encourage students in the Arab World to read. The initiative titled, “Arab Reading Challenge” aims to bring up a generation who excels in reading and pursuit of knowledge. It is indeed a great thing to instil in our children and students the desire to read. This should set the basis for academic and intellectual progress in our countries. It should also help build generations of passionate readers and researchers.

O Allah, peace and blessings be upon our Master Muhammad, his pure family and companions. O Lord, please guide us towards knowledge, grant success and welfare to our children, facilitate means of reading for them, and make them love reading and knowledge, O Lord of the Worlds.

O Allah, please confer Your blessings and grant peace upon our Prophet Muhammad pbuh and all his companions. May Allah have mercy on the honourable martyrs of our country and gather them with the righteous. May Allah forgive them, honour them and make Paradise their dwelling with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favour of the prophets and the steadfast affirmers of truth.

O Allah, please grant the best reward for the families of the martyrs and offer them patience and solace. May Allah accept the martyrs of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Morocco and dwell them with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favour of the prophets and the steadfast affirmers of truth. May Allah grant victory to

the soldiers of the Arab Coalition who gathered to restore the rights to their owners. O Lord, please be by their side and guide the Yemeni people to everything that is good. O Allah, make them rally for the word of truth and legitimacy, and bless them with welfare and stability, O the Most Generous.

O Allah, we implore You at this instant not to let a sin unforgiven, a distress unrelieved, an illness unhealed, a dead without mercy or a debt unsettled. Our Lord, give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire.

May Allah be pleased with the Rightly Guided Caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, and all of the Honoured Companions.

O Allah, may we ask You to help us with what gets us closer to Paradise and furthers us from Hell. O Allah, we seek Your grace to admit us, our parents, whoever has done a favour to us and all Muslims to Your Paradise.

May Allah grant success and continued health and care to the UAE President HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed. May Allah also ensure success to his Vice President, trustworthy Crown Prince and his brothers, Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Emirates.

O Allah, forgive all of the Muslims, men and women, living and dead. May Allah have mercy on Sheikh Zayed, Sheikh Maktoum and the Late UAE Sheikhs. O Lord, forgive and show mercy on our parents, relatives and whoever has done a favour to us.

O Allah, we pray to You to grant Your forgiveness and reward to who built this mosque and to his or her parents as well as to anyone who gave to this mosque. O Allah, we also supplicate to You to forgive whoever built a mosque where Your name is remembered.

O Allah, make this gathering one of compassion, and our dispersion after it one that is infallible. O Allah, do not let anyone amongst us be deprived or desperate.

We pray to Allah, the Most Gracious, to protect the UAE against any of temptations, both apparent and hidden, and continue blessing the UAE with safety and security.

O Servants of Allah, “Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.” (Annahl: ٩٠).

O servants of Allah,

Remember Allah and He will remember you. Be grateful of His benevolence and He will increase His blessings to you. Allah says, **“and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do.”** (Al Ankaboot: ٤٥).

Translation:

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Note: The English translation of the Quran and Hadith is an interpretation of their meanings, and does not have the status of their original Arabic texts.