

AsSalaamu-'alaikum Muslim Students and Dear community members,

Early Ramadan Mubarak! I hope you are all in the best of health and faith, and ready for the blessed month on our doorstep. The first fast of Ramadan this year will be either Friday April 24th or Saturday April 25th. (I will email out Thursday evening, God willing)

As we all enter into this month, I wanted to share with you some beneficial information for this blessed month

These are divided into: (so you can scroll to what you wanna find)

1. Some info about Ramadan
2. What's different this year?
3. Some articles & videos for preparation/benefit
4. Googleform link to sign up for regular nightly min-programming I will be hosting throughout the month

1. Some info about Fasting for Muslims and Ramadan

What?... and How?

During the month of Ramadan which is the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Muslims fast from true dawn (when the light of the sun appears horizontally across the horizon) until sunset (when the sphere of the sun has passed the horizon line).

They fast from those things which are normally lawful, primarily: food, drink, and physical intimacy 🙅 (for those married 😊) ... as well as those which are normally unlawful/sinful: lying, cheating, cursing, backbiting, harming oneself or others, listening to or watching unlawful and/or harmful things, etc.

NOT EVEN WATER??? Yes, not even water. You need not ask every year 🤓

The times this year mean from roughly 4:00am (and getting earlier) until 7:38pm (and getting later), each day for 29 or 30 days (the duration of the lunar month). So there's about a 15hr+ fast and an 8.5hr- window during which Muslims have a small fast-breaking meal (*iftaar*), pray their sunset prayer (*maghrib*), pray their night prayer (*isha*) (and many attend extra communal prayers specific to Ramadan), sleep, wake up, and eat a pre-dawn meal/breakfast (*suhoor*) before praying the dawn prayer (*fajr*) and starting the cycle all over again. 🐦

Why?

In the Qur'an, God says:

"You who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may be mindful of God." [2:183]

The month of Ramadan was a month that was prescribed for fasting for the community of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The word used for "mindfulness of God" in Arabic is *taqwa* (pronounced: tuq-wa), which comes from the same root as the word *wiqaaya* which means a shield. It's meant to increase our spiritual awareness of our actions and speech. When we focus less on what we put into our mouths, we tend to focus more on what we are doing with our limbs. It helps us to be hyper-aware and sensitive to our actions, and focus on our relationship with God. This is done via individual and communal ritual worship as well as service-oriented worship.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also said: *"Fasting is a shield."* [An-Nasai]

It has the automatic effect of protecting one from harm, if used properly. Here we are talking about spiritual harm. The focus is purification of the heart (the spiritual heart), but purifying and detoxifying the physical heart helps in this process too!

Muslims welcome Ramadan because of the immense blessings therein as well as finding time to be with family and friends. There is also immense reward as mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh):

"He who observes fasting during the month of Ramadan with Faith while seeking its reward from Allah, will have his past sins forgiven."

and in another narration he (pbuh) said:

"He who observes optional prayer (Tarawih prayers) throughout Ramadan, out of sincerity of Faith and in the hope of earning reward will have his past sins pardoned."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Good deeds are rewarded manifold over and there are greater restrictions placed on bad deeds. So Muslims are encouraged to increase any acts of good, be it ritual worship, prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, acts of kindness, charity, etc... Even smiling is charity 😄 (not that much...) 😊 (that's better!)

Muslims have been fasting Ramadan all over the world in every season for over 1400 years (That's what the A.H. in the subject line is, After Hijrah (migration), the first year of the Islamic lunar Calendar which corresponds with 622/623 C.E (common era)). They take on and fulfill this religious duty to their utmost while fulfilling their normal day-to-day obligations. Yes, of course it makes regular physical and mental tasks a bit more difficult, but it's all part of the 5-pillar package of Islam. We starve the body (just a bit) and thereby our lower desires so that the soul can thrive and see what it is really capable of. 🧡

2. What's different this year?

Muslims come together during Ramadan to communally break their fast and offer extra congregational prayers at the mosque during the night. Due to our inability to congregate as physical communities in our homes of worship, for those with family members in their homes, they will congregate together and pray together as families.

Those who are physically separated from or do not live with fellow Muslims, or even those who do but are unable to physically come together with their families may experience an additional feeling of FOMO (fear of missing out) (yes, I originally had to UrbanDictionary that or ask a student too!). This does not mean those individuals are alone. Allah mentions in the Qur'an: "Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity." [2:286] and "and He is with you wherever you are" [57:4].

Although people may be physically distant from one another, that does not mean they are alone. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *"The example of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever."*

Anyone is of course welcome to reach out whenever they feel the need. Additionally, I as the Muslim Chaplain with and for the Muslim Student Association are putting together continued programming for Ramadan. See #4.

3. A few articles/resources to make the best use of Ramadan

In terms of rules and regulations of fasting:

This is a free mini-course, it's 40ish minutes about fasting basics

<https://igicourses.com/p/ramadan>

Shaykh Musa Furber has a great short (~17min) reading on the legal rulings of fasting (Although these are the fiqh rulings according to the Shafi'i school, it is a good overview for those who want a bit of a refresher or for those unfamiliar.

<https://soundcloud.com/musafurber/evident-memorandum-chapter-5-fasting?in=musafurber/sets/reading-through-the-evident>

Articles and videos to help make the best of Ramadan:

This is a great short article by Shaykh Khalil Abdul-Rashid: The Pre-Ramadan Checklist: Health, Wealth & Stealth

<http://almadinainstitute.org/blog/the-pre-ramadan-checklist-health-wealth-stealth/>

This is an article written by Ustadhah Maryam Amirebrahimi titled: "I Don't Feel Ramadan." This short article is also about how to best utilize the month to our advantage.

<http://www.virtualmosque.com/islam-studies/hot-topics/i-dont-feel-ramadan/>

Imam Suhaib Webb- Fasting, Materialism and Time Management: Ramadan Advice

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDfO46rl0_g

Food - A Balanced Approach with Dr. Abdullah bin Hamid Ali and Shaykh Hamza Yusuf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASJXp-zV98>

In Preparation for Ramadan - Shaykh Mohammed Amin Kholwadia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhzerjxBU2g>

Free Course: Maximizing Ramadan 2020 (COVID-19 Edition)

<https://igicourses.com/p/covid19ramadan>

4. Late-night mini-Majlis link

Throughout the month, I will be covering a series of topics primarily aimed at spiritual development. Those interested may sign up via the link below

<https://forms.gle/rY7RNgt4d4d7EyEW7>

There is plenty of information out there. Make sure to do what provides the most benefit. I have tried to provide a few resources that will help us channel our efforts in utilizing Ramadan in the best way possible.

May Allah(SWT) make it a month of great benefit and blessing for all of us. Ameen.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to email me. 😊

Bilal

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