150633 - Do You Get Reward for Listening to the Quran Without Understanding It?

the question

Will a person (a believer) be rewarded if he listens to the Quran without understanding what he is listening to, but he knows that it is Quran? Or will he not be rewarded unless he understands what he is hearing? I hope you could give some evidence from the Quran and authentic Hadiths.

Summary of answer

A person will be rewarded for reading the Quran whether he understands its meanings or not, but he should be very keen to understand its meanings and to learn these meanings from scholars who are trustworthy in their knowledge.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The command to listen to the Quran attentively

Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded the believers to listen to the Quran attentively , in a general command. He says (interpretation of the meaning): “So, when the Quran is recited, listen to it, and be silent that you may receive mercy.” [Al-A`raf 7:204]

Shaykh As-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“This command is general and includes everyone who hears the Book of Allah being recited. He is enjoined to listen to it and keep quiet. The difference between listening and keeping quiet is that keeping quiet is done outwardly by not speaking or being distracted with anything that would keep one from focusing on listening to it.

As for listening to it, this means that one hears it with an attentive heart, pondering the meaning of what one is listening to. The one who adheres to these two commands when the Book of Allah is recited will attain a great deal of good, beneficial knowledge, ongoing and renewed faith, increased guidance and insight into his religion. Hence Allah connected the attainment of mercy to them, which indicates that the one who does not keep quiet and listen attentively when the Book is recited to him will be deprived of the share of mercy and has missed out on a great deal of good.

The most emphatic command with regard to listening to the Quran attentively has to do with prayers in which Quran is recited out loud by the imam , in which one is enjoined to listen attentively, to such an extent that most of the scholars say that his focusing on keeping quiet and listening attentively takes priority over his reciting Al-Fatihah etc." (Tafsir As-Sa`di, 314)

The greater aim of keeping quiet and listening attentively is so that the listener may ponder and understand the meanings, and act upon them.

Imam At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"Allah says to those who believe in Him and in His Book, for whom the Quran is guidance and mercy: "So, when the Quran is recited", to you, O believers; "listen to it", i.e. lend your ears so that you might understand its verses and learn from its exhortation; "and be silent" and listen to it attentively, so that you might understand and ponder, and do not utter idle talk during it lest you do not understand; "that you may receive mercy" i.e., that you might receive the mercy of your Lord by heeding His exhortation and adhering to His limits and to what He enjoins upon you in the verses." (Tafsir At-Tabari, 13/244)

If a person manages to achieve that, i.e., keeping quiet, listening attentively, pondering what is recited to him and understanding its meanings, that will bring him goodness in this world and the Hereafter.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“By means of this listening, Allah guides His slaves and sets straight their affairs in this world and the Hereafter; with this the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was sent, and he enjoined it upon the Muhajirin and Ansar and those who followed them in truth. The early generations used to gather for this purpose. When the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gathered together, they would tell one of their number to recite whilst they listened. `Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) would say to Abu Musa: Remind us of our Lord, and Abu Musa would recite the Quran whilst they listened.” (Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 11/626)

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As listening in the complete sense is that in which one understands and ponders, there is no doubt that the one who does that as much as he is able is to be commended for what he does, and he is excused for what he is incapable of. But what one is incapable of should not be an excuse for not doing what one is able to do of goodness. What is possible is not to be omitted because of what is difficult; in other words, whatever a person is able to do of obligatory or recommended actions is not waived because of what he is incapable of doing, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can” [At-Taghabun 64:16]

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Will a person be rewarded if he reads the Quran, even if he does not understand its meanings?

He replied:

“The Glorious Quran is blessed, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “(This is) a Book (the Quran) which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, that they may ponder over its Verses, and that men of understanding may remember.” [Sad 38:29]

So man is enjoined to read it, whether he understands its meanings or not. But the believer who is enjoined to act upon it should not read the Quran without understanding its meanings. If a person wants to learn medicine, for example, and studies the books of medicine, he cannot benefit from

them unless he understands their meanings and they are explained to him; in fact he will be very keen to understand the meanings so that he can apply them. So why do you think anyone should read the Book of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, which is a healing for what is in the hearts and exhortation to people, without pondering and without understanding its meanings? For this reason the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) would not move on from ten verses until they had learned them and learned the knowledge they contained and how to act upon it. So they learned the Quran and knowledge and action all together.

A person will be rewarded for reading the Quran whether he understands its meanings or not, but he should be very keen to understand its meanings and to learn these meanings from scholars who are trustworthy in their knowledge. If he has no access to a scholar who can teach him the meanings, he may refer to the trustworthy books of Tafsir, such as Tafsir Ibn Jarir, Tafsir Ibn Kathir and others which pay attention to the Tafsir that is based on reports narrated from the Companions and the Successors (may Allah be pleased with them)." (Fatawa Nur `ala Ad-Darb)

For more details, please see the following answers: 106961 , 50010 , 124657 , 78370 , 174743 , 10672 , and 147164 .

And Allah knows best.