All praise is due to Allah. May blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, and upon his family, his companions, and those who follow him. As for what follows:

Al-Bukhari reported under the chapter titled “al-'Amal fil-'Ashr al-Awakhir min Ramadan” and likewise Muslim under the chapter titled “al-Ijtihad fil-'Ashr al-Awakhir min Shahr Ramadan” that Ummul-Muminin ‘Aishah  said, “The Prophetﷺ, when the [last] ten [days] arrived, would tighten his lower garment, stay awake at night, and awaken his family.” And in a narration from Muslim, ‘Aishah  said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ would strive in the last ten [days] in a way he wouldn't strive in others [i.e. other days].”

Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ would dedicate the last ten nights of Ramadan to doing good deeds, would strive to perform acts of worship therein, and would incite others to perform them, and from among these acts of worship were:

1. Ihya al-Layl (Staying Awake at Night): The meaning of ihya al-layl is to spend the night staying awake for prayer, reciting the Quran, remembering Allah, and other than that, and it is possible that what is meant by the hadith is to stay awake the whole night just as it is possible that what is meant is to stay awake most of the night. So let those standing in prayer strive and compete in that regard in accordance with their ability.

2. Awakening One’s Family: The statement of ‘Aishah , “and awaken his family,” means: awaken his wives for night prayer, for it was narrated by ‘Ali  that the Prophetﷺ would awaken his family during the last ten [nights] of Ramadan (A hasan hadith, reported by at-Tirmidhi). And Ibn ‘Umar reported that Ibn al-Khattab , when it reached the middle of the night, would awaken his family for prayer while reciting, “And enjoin prayer upon your family and be steadfast therein” (Sahih, reported by Malik in al-Muwatta). Sufyan ath-Thawri said, “What is most beloved to me is that when the last ten [nights] have arrived that one stands in prayer at night and strives therein and awakens his wife and child for prayer if they can endure that” (Lataif al-Ma’arif fima li Mawasim al-‘Amm min al-Wadhaif li Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali).

3. Tightening One’s Lower Garment: It is mentioned in the explanation of this hadith that it means: Striving in worship, but this explanation is weak because ‘Aishah  said, “He became serious and tightened his lower garment,” so she add “tightened his lower garment” to her mention of his seriousness. That which is correct, and which the imams of knowledge are upon, is that what is intended by tightening his lower garment is: isolating oneself from women, and what supports this is that he would spend the last ten days in i’tikaf, and it is prohibited for the one performing i’tikaf to approach his wife.

4. I’tikaf: I’tikaf is to stay in the masjid, dedicate oneself for the purpose of worship, and cut off the worldly connections that distract one from the Hereafter. It is reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim from ‘Aishah  said, “The Prophetﷺ would perform i’tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah took him, and then his wives performed i’tikaf after him.” And he would only perform
i’tikaf in these last ten days in order to fully occupy his
time with worshiping his Lord, conversing with Him in
solitude, remembering Him, and supplicating to Him.
5. Seeking Laylatul-Qadr (the Night of Decree): This
is done due to his statement, “Seek laylatul-qadr in the
last ten [nights] of Ramadan” (Reported by al-Bukhari
and Muslim), and his statement, “Whoever stands [for
prayer] during laylatul-qadr with faith and in anticipation
of reward will have his previous sins forgiven.” Therefore,
the virtues of this night with Allah are great, and the
reward of worship therein is equivalent to [the reward of] a
thousand months of worship!
6. Reciting the Quran: The recitation of the Book
of Allah in this month is exceedingly important. He said,
“The month of Ramadhan [is that] in which was re-
vealed the Quran” (Al-Baqarah 185). Because of that, the
Messenger of Allah was very concerned with studying
Quran with Jibril in every one of the nights of Rama-
dan (Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim). Reciting the
Quran is even further emphasized in the last ten days of
Ramadan specifically, for the Salaf were very concerned
with reciting the Quran in this month due what they knew
of the virtue of recitation within it, and their concern in
that regard would increase in the [last] ten nights (Lataif
al-Ma‘arif li Ibn Rajab).

Conclusion: It is but a matter of days before the last ten
nights come upon us. So roll up your sleeves for it, O Muslim,
for by Allah it is an immense blessing for the one who perfects
his worship therein, and it is a great opportunity whereby he
who lets it pass has failed and lost, and they are the most vir-
tuous of nights in the year without exception, as the people of
knowledge have clarified.

O Allah, let the ten nights of Ramadan reach us, and fa-
cilitate for us the goodness of worship therein. O Allah, send
blessings and peace upon our prophet, Muhammad, and upon
his family and his companions.