

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

# Submitters Perspective

Monthly Bulletin of International  
Community of Submitters

www.masjiduntucson.org



Published by Masjid Tucson  
Shawal 1430

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## Competing in Righteousness

In the Quran, God has recommended for the believers to compete in righteousness:

*[2:148] Each of you chooses the direction to follow; you shall **race towards righteousness**. Wherever you may be, GOD will summon you all. GOD is Omnipotent.*

*[5:48] Then we revealed to you this scripture, truthfully, confirming previous scriptures, and superseding them. You shall rule among them in accordance with GOD's revelations, and do not follow their wishes if they differ from the truth that came to you. For each of you, we have decreed laws and different rites. Had GOD willed, He could have made you one congregation. But He thus puts you to the test through the revelations He has given each of you. You shall **compete in righteousness**. To GOD is your final destiny - all of you - then He will inform you of everything you had disputed.*

*[23:61] They are eager to do righteous works; they compete in doing them.*

What is the Quranic intent of such a recommendation? What is God truly advocating by asking us to compete in righteousness? The Arabic word that God has consistently used in this regard is "sabiqu." In Arabic, this verb means spending extra effort to hasten in achieving a specific goal before others – competing.

Does this mean that God would want the believers to actually compete against each other—such as in competitive sports—for God's pleasure and approval? In the light of the Quran, it seems that the element of striving and spending an extraordinary effort to do the righteous works rather than competing for winning and doing better than others is all that God is emphasizing by using the word—sabiqu or compete.

Let's take a close look. If we look at the statements in the above verses about competing in righteousness as an actual competition among fellow believers, this might sound like and lead to ego-related wars. Please analyze the following statements and see

for yourself if you are able to detect some ego-based motives:

- This believer is doing more righteous works than I! I can and I must do better than him.

- This believer sounds very knowledgeable with the Quran and he memorizes a lot of its contexts and verses! I'm supposed to compete with him to be more knowledgeable and much more righteous than him!

- If she gives \$5 to this needy person, then I must give \$10 to feed the homeless person across the street in order to be more righteous and earn more credit than her!

Another example would be those who participate in competitions for the sake of winning to prove that they are the best while ignoring the spirit of the practice itself and how important to simply work hard, strive, and be honest and sincere in doing what we are doing irrespective of the results.

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In other words, winning becomes an ego-related issue and not the fruit for sincerity, hard work, practice, and dedication.

In all the above examples, we can easily sense the ego as a motive. We can read between the lines some false superiority and undeserved self recognition. We can feel the "I'm better" theme which originates from nothing but a wild ego. We all know that this is the same exact statement that was once uttered by Satan, the one who never gives up on inflating our egos at all times:

*[7:11] We created you, then we shaped you, then we said to the angels, "Fall prostrate before Adam." They fell prostrate, except Iblees (Satan); he was not with the prostrators.*

*[7:12] He said, "What prevented you from prostrating when I ordered you?" He said, "I am better than he; You created me from fire, and created him from mud."*

*[7:13] He said, "Therefore, you must go down, for you are not to be arrogant here. Get out; you are debased."*

If the Quran is clearly advising the believers to constantly work on killing their egos (2:54, 45:23), then the ego-based element of doing better than other believers is not really what God is advocating when He tells us to compete and hasten in doing righteous works. It seems that there must be a constant struggle between striving and hastening in doing righteous deeds to attain God's approval and pleasure and killing our egos so we never get caught up in the turmoil of "I must do better" or lose the spirit of simply working harder to be a better human and more righteous believer.

In fact, we are here on earth only to kill our ego since it once made us all commit our very first sin and caused

us to hesitate in acknowledging God as the only authoritative and supreme power. Therefore, it is our duty to keep the war on against our egos while hastening in redeeming our souls. This only means that the competition God is advocating is not by any means against our fellow believers to do better than them, but rather a self strife effort and an endeavor to win God's approval and earn His pleasure.

*[2:54] Recall that Moses said to his people, "O my people, you have wronged your souls by worshiping the calf. You must repent to your Creator. You shall kill your egos. This is better for you in the sight of your Creator." He did redeem you. He is the Redeemer, Most Merciful.*

*[45:23] Have you noted the one whose god is his ego? Consequently, GOD sends him astray, despite his knowledge, seals his hearing and his mind, and places a veil on his eyes. Who then can guide him, after such a decision by GOD? Would you not take heed?*

*[7:199] You shall resort to pardon, advocate tolerance, and disregard the ignorant.*

*[7:200] When the devil whispers to you any whisper, seek refuge in GOD; He is Hearer, Omniscient.*

*[7:201] Those who are righteous, whenever the devil approaches them with an idea, they remember, whereupon they become seers.*

*[5:35] O you who believe, you shall reverence GOD and seek the ways and means to Him, and strive in His cause, that you may succeed.*

Another healthy element when we consider competing in righteousness is the symbiotic relationship with other fellow believers. Some tiny and peaceful creatures help other fierce or giant ones with cleaning their bodies or removing potentially dangerous micro-organisms/bugs/worms off their systems. Similarly, when God advises us to compete in righteousness, He wants us to look

around us and benefit from all the righteous believers, using their knowledge and talents to progress our souls. We look up to them, and follow their righteous examples rather than competing for the sake of doing better than them. It seems that this is one of the benefits of forcing ourselves to be with the believers according to 18:28. Here are some examples we should follow when we compete in righteousness:

*[61:4] GOD loves those who fight in His cause united in one column, like the bricks in one wall.*

*[42:38] They respond to their Lord by observing the Contact Prayers (Salat). Their affairs are decided after due consultation among themselves, and from our provisions to them they give (to charity).*

*[16:125] You shall invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kind enlightenment, and debate with them in the best possible manner. Your Lord knows best who has strayed from His path, and He knows best who are the guided ones.*

*[17:53] Tell My servants to treat each other in the best possible manner, for the devil will always try to drive a wedge among them. Surely, the devil is man's most ardent enemy.*

*[25:63] The worshipers of the Most Gracious are those who tread the earth gently, and when the ignorant speak to them, they only utter peace.*

In conclusion, the essence of competing in righteousness is not about trying to do better than other fellow believers or about considering them as opponents in a race but it is about a self-striving effort to achieve higher ranks and become better human beings and believers. God wants us to use all the tools and means to become closer to Him, and to redeem our souls.

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Competing with other believers is one of these tools as it enables us to observe them, and wisely look up to the good role models from among them, trying to follow their examples. Ego is an evil intruder which will divert this effort towards self recognition and an urge to do better than others. Once this is sensed, we must declare war against our ego and lean towards the divine and healthy spirit of competing in righteousness.

*[3:133] You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous,*

*[3:134] who give to charity during the good times, as well as the bad times. They are suppressors of anger, and pardoners of the people. GOD loves the charitable.*

*[3:135] If they fall in sin or wrong their souls, they remember GOD and ask forgiveness for their sins - and who forgives the sins except GOD - and they do not persist in sins, knowingly.*

*[3:136] Their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens with flowing streams; they abide therein forever. What a blessed reward for the workers!*

Joseph S.

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## 2009 CONFERENCE REPORT

*[27:19] ...My Lord, direct me to be appreciative of the blessings You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and to do the righteous works that please You. Admit me by Your mercy into the company of Your righteous servants.*

*[26:83-5] My Lord, grant me wisdom, and include me with the righteous. Let the example I set for the future generations be a good one. Make me one of the inheritors of the blissful Paradise.*

The 24<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the United Submitters International was held in Sacramento, California on July 31-August 2, 2009, with nearly 300 submitters attending. It is always such a joy to come together each year for the purpose of commemorating God, sharing ideas, and looking to the future of spreading the message. The focus of this year's conference was appreciation of God's blessings.

One of our brothers from Sacramento, Thomas, gave the khutba. He reminded us that we need to be appreciative and to keep imploring God for His guidance. *[3:8] Our Lord, let not our hearts waver, now that You have guided us. Shower us with Your mercy; You are the Grantor.* We also need to be forgiving of others as God is forgiving of us. *[42:43] Resorting to patience and forgiveness reflects a true strength of character.*

Abdullah welcomed submitters from near and far with the example of Abraham who was kind and caring of everyone. This teaches us to be appreciative of our brothers and sisters around the world and give space to allow people to grow. We need to reflect on our own works and not worry about what others are doing. It's our relationship with God that matters, and our prayer is *[2:201] ... "Our Lord, grant us righteousness in this world, and righteousness in the Hereafter, and spare us the retribution of Hell."*

Several first time attendees then told how they came to submission, bringing their enthusiasm to energize everyone. All of them had inspirational stories of their journey into the worship of God alone, and how finding

true submission has made their lives so much better.

The zikr (meditation on God) Friday and Saturday evenings was beautiful as always. Meauvell, Parivash, Parisa, and several others led the group in musical commemoration of God. Everyone's voices blending together to praise and worship God was awe-inspiring.

The talks were informative, fun, heartwarming and inspirational. There were many new ideas on ways to improve our submission and come closer to God. Youthful speakers inspired us all with their sincere, uncluttered and clear understanding of God. They are the future, praise God. So many things that we can learn from each other. The sharing of thoughts and ideas helps us all to grow in submission.

All too soon it was Sunday noon, time to hug and say our goodbyes. We thank God for bringing us all together for a wonderful union. May God bless the conference organizers and the Sacramento community for their hard work in making this conference such a success. The weather was specially wonderful for us by God's grace and the location was excellent. The Holiday Inn is located in downtown Sacramento with easy walks to the Capitol, a nice shopping mall and Old Sacramento.

God willing, next year's conference will be held in Tucson. The date is yet to be fixed, but we will keep everyone informed. May God bless everyone with a wonderful year. God willing, we will all be able to get together in 2010 for another memorable weekend of commemoration of God.

*[15:98-9] You shall sing the praises of your Lord, and be with the prostrators. And worship your Lord, in order to attain certainty.*

Nargis and Lydia

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ISSN 1089-053X

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## *What is Submission? Unity of All Submitters Righteous Jews & Christians*

Although the word "Submitter" is the English equivalent of the Arabic word "Muslim," and the word "Submission" is the English equivalent of the Arabic word "Islam," the underlying implication of these words is very profound, and far from the superficial meanings that are traditionally understood or used.

A Submitter can be defined as a person who submits to the will of God. The state of Submission, which can only take place between the person and God Almighty, is considered to be the only acceptable form of worship by God. (3:19, 85). Therefore, Submission is not just a name of a religion; rather it describes one's devotion to God alone.

Submission is a religion whereby one recognizes God's absolute authority, and reaches a conviction that only God possesses all power; no other entity possesses any power that is independent of Him. The natural result of such a realization is to devote one's life and one's worship absolutely to God alone. This is the First Commandment in all the scriptures, including the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Final Testament (The Quran).

Abraham was a submitter to God alone. So were Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. All God's prophets and messengers were Submitters. They all preached the same basic message of worshiping only God without idolizing anything or anyone beside Him.

*[3:67] Abraham was neither Jewish, nor Christian; he was a monotheist submitter. He never was an idol worshiper.*

We learn from the Quran that while every religion has been corrupted by innovations, traditions, and false, idolatrous doctrines, there may be "Submitters" within every religion. There may be Submitters who are Christian by association, or Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or anything else. These Submitters, collectively, constitute the only religion acceptable to God. All Submitters who are devoted to God alone, and do not set up any idols beside God, are redeemed into God's eternal kingdom.

*[2:62] Surely, those who believe, those who are Jewish, the Christians, and the converts; anyone who (1) believes in GOD, and (2) believes in the Last Day, and (3) leads a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.*

*[3:113] They are **NOT ALL THE SAME**; among the followers of the scripture, there are those who are righteous. They recite GOD's revelations through the night, and they fall prostrate.*

God knows who is a Submitter in heart, and guides the individual accordingly to His path.

*[3:84] Say, "We believe in GOD, and in what was sent down to us, and in what was sent down to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Patriarchs, and in what was given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them. To Him alone we are submitters."*

Let us hear from you to join us for networking of submitters....

\* \* \* \* \*

## *A Submitter's Prayer*

Dear God,

You are the Greatest. The most Forgiving, the most Understanding. You are the only Lord to whom all Kingship belongs. My Helper and my Protector, You never fail to astound. My life is Yours; I am Yours. My heart beats for You and my mind thinks for You. All, my dear Lord, is for You.

I'm sorry I am imperfect, but all perfection is Yours. I regret my shortcomings, but after all I am only a human, while You are the only Great God, to whom all things bow down. Your infinite mercy runs parallel to my desperation, for I am desperate for your approval—desperate for You. I seek You night and day. I devote all of my being to You, knowing that no other is more worthy. I pray for the strength and patience to deserve You. I pray for the persistence and guidance that can only come from You.

I am your loyal servant. Imperfect as I may be, I only seek to perfect my worship to You alone. My dear Master, you are all I have, all I want, all I need. Please stay with me, please let me continue loving You, but above all, *please*, let me deserve You..

Sincerely,

*A Submitter from Canada*