

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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Submitters, Quran and the 12 Steps

This is the last in this series of articles on the 12 Steps and how they relate to the Quran and Submission. So far in the series we have discussed all of the steps except the last two. Since this is the last article we will quickly summarize the earlier steps. For the verses and much greater detail on each step you can refer to the articles in the February, March, June, August and October *Submitters Perspective* issues of this year.

The first three steps form the foundation of the 12 Steps, and when closely examined they are also very relevant to Submission. Step 1 as applied to Submission is “We admitted we were powerless over anything; that our lives had become unmanageable.” If we do not recognize that only God has any power, things do indeed become crazy and unmanageable. If we try to control our lives by ourselves, without turning to God for help, we soon find that we have no power at all. One would think that this step is unnecessary for Submitters, but how often have we tried to take things into our own hands only to find everything falling apart? Step 2 is “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” In

this step we recognize that only God can help us and make our lives happy and good. We remember that *only* God can do anything, and *only* He can help us in any way. Step 3 is “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.” For many of us this defines the essence of Submission. We strive to totally trust and depend on God alone and turn everything over to Him. However once again we have to work hard at it. It’s in our own interests to examine ourselves. Are we always totally trusting in God alone or do we sometimes try to depend on someone or something else, including ourselves.

This is where the remainder of the steps can be of help in our striving. Getting to know ourselves well so we can see our defects and address them can help us “turn our will and our lives over to the care of God” (Step 3). To honestly see ourselves, we make a “thorough and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” in Step 4. Then in Step 5 we admit to ourselves and to God what we have discovered about ourselves. We can also share our findings with another person whom we trust. While the Quran does not require that we share our negative aspects with anyone else besides God,

doing so is an opportunity to work on killing our egos and also follow the Quranic principle of consultation.

In Step 6 we become ready for God to heal us of any and all moral and spiritual defects. In Step 7 we humbly implore Him to remove our shortcomings. In Step 8 we make a list of all people that we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them. In Step 9 we make those amends, God willing.

As part of this process we repent to God for anything unrighteous that we have uncovered, and we do everything reasonable to make things right with others. We firmly intend to reform. By God’s mercy and with His help we do our best to “clean our slate”. Once we reach this point, we want to keep that slate clean. Step 10 encourages us to do this by continuing to take personal inventory, quickly recognizing and admitting our errors, God willing. Some of us do this nightly, others may do it at dawn as part of praying for forgiveness and others do this periodically.

This brings us to **Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying**

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for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Praying to God helps us to remember Him and connect with Him (20:14, 29:45): [20:14] *“I am GOD; there is no other god beside Me. You shall worship Me alone, and observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) to remember Me”*. In the Contact Prayers we pray for His guidance (1:6). Remembering and commemorating God through prayer and meditation can help us strengthen our connection with Him and become more aware of His guidance. That guidance then helps us to surrender or submit our wills to Him.

The Quran speaks of prayer a great number of times. For the Contact Prayers it is at least 70 times and if we include informal praying and imploring it is far more. This is an indication of how important praying to God is for our spiritual growth. In this step we pray to know His will for us and for the power to carry it out. When we pray for this we are essentially praying for the ability to submit absolutely to Him—to subdue our will and to follow His will. May we come to submit like Moses did when he wished to see God. God said: [7:143] ... *“You cannot see Me. Look at that mountain; if it stays in its place, then you can see Me.” Then, his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, and this caused it to crumble. Moses fell unconscious. When he came to, he said, “Be You glorified. I repent to You, and I am the most convinced believer.”*

There are many other Quranic verses that apply to this step. God speaks of meditation and urges us to meditate on Him and commemorate Him. Here are just two examples: [50:40] *During the night you shall meditate on His name, and after prostrating.* [76:25] *And commemorate the name of your Lord day and night.*

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

We believe the essence of both Submission and the 12 Steps is to surren-

der or submit totally to God—trusting in Him and depending on Him *alone*. God advocates spreading the message of submission to Him (41:33, 16:125), and there is wisdom in this. When we spread the message, we are actively thinking and talking about it and this can make the message come alive for us and reinforce it for us. Surrender and submission to God is the goal and message of the 12 steps. These steps are one tool that we can share with others to aid in their striving to reach that goal.

As to practicing the principles of the 12 Steps in all our (relevant) affairs, the originator of the 12 Step program, Bill W, believed that each step was a principle in and of itself, and we have discussed how these principles/ steps are righteous and in accord with the Quran. Thus, it follows that if we choose to take the approach of using the 12 Steps, we may wish to try to practice them in relevant aspects of our lives. In any case, we wish to be righteous “in all our affairs”: [16:90] *GOD advocates justice, charity, and regarding the relatives. And He forbids evil, vice, and transgression. He enlightens you, that you may take heed.* There are many other verses that apply to being righteous in all aspects of our lives. See for example 46:15 and 2:148. Once again, we see how this last step is in harmony with the Quran and can be a part of striving to be a good Submitter.

This brings us to the end of this series of articles on the 12 Steps and the Quran. While we have discussed how these principles are in line with Quran, we do know that the Quran is fully detailed and our only source of religious guidance (6:19). So, the 12 Steps are not intended as an alternative to the Quran. Instead what we find by examining them or other writings (39:17-18) is that the more we study and learn, the more we understand and appreciate God’s perfect wisdom and guidance in the Quran.

Submitters striving to heal & grow our souls with Quran and the 12 steps

Reference:

<https://www.aacleve.org/twelve-spiritual-principles/>

Comparing with Others

Comparing ourselves to others can be a negative thing, if it is used in a way that allows our ego to do the comparing. An 18th century French philosopher, Nicolas de Condorcet, said: “Enjoy your life without comparing it with that of another for there will always be others whose lives on the face of it appear better. However, just remember and focus on the fact that your life could be much worse and be grateful it isn’t. No matter what others or even you may briefly think, you are lucky things aren’t worse, so be grateful.”

You may easily come off looking bad if you look at someone else’s apparent strengths or possessions compared to your weaknesses or lacks. They may be better educated or wealthier than you. Even if you compare strength to strength, there will always be those who are better, and those who are worse. Whenever you are on the ladder of accomplishments, there will always be someone more accomplished. [12:76] ... *that was the will of GOD. We exalt whomever we choose to higher ranks. Above every knowledgeable one, there is one who is even more knowledgeable.*

Even if you do well in comparison with others, it’s likely temporary. If you win the comparison, it could be a short-lived boost of ego that is easily knocked down. Or you may covet what others have or resent them for doing well, without really knowing the true person. My conclusion is: Focus on your own soul; don’t knock others down; don’t expect to be perfect, instead expect to work hard to improve.

Someone else’s good or bad can neither help nor harm us, but the quality of our souls can. This life is a journey to grow our souls, not a competitive race to beat someone else. The journey involves tests

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to show if we steadfastly persevere and lead a righteous life. [3:186] *You will certainly be tested, through your money and your lives, and you will hear from those who received the scripture, and from the idol worshipers, a lot of insult. If you steadfastly persevere and lead a righteous life, this will prove the strength of your faith.*

The tendency to compare ourselves to others is human. But as Theodore Roosevelt said: "Comparison is the thief of joy." It's a decision that can get us caught up in what we don't have. Let's not waste time vainly comparing ourselves with others seeking to boost our egos if we have more or be unhappy when we have less. Instead, we should be joyful and appreciative of God's blessings and work hard to grow our souls to be worthy of more.

Comparisons are sometimes unfair since we may compare the worst we perceive about one individual to the best we presume about another. Our egos may disastrously grow seeing ourselves as better or get hurt if we realize we're not. Comparisons take up precious time. Comparison puts focus on the wrong person, thinking about other peoples' lives rather than our own.

The so-called "perfection" of others is an illusion. In this world, some people are given more than others, but it doesn't make their lives perfect (9:55). And comparisons can turn friends and allies into enemies.

Comparisons rooted in this world are often about ego and jealousy. Both are human weaknesses to guard against.

[25:43] Have you seen the one whose god is his own ego? Will you be his advocate?

[2:213] The people used to be one community when GOD sent the prophets as bearers of good news, as well as warners. He sent down with them the scripture, bearing the truth, to judge among the people in their disputes. Ironically, those

who received the scripture were the ones who rejected any new scripture, despite clear proofs given to them. This is due to jealousy on their part. GOD guides those who believe to the truth that is disputed by all others, in accordance with His will. GOD guides whoever wills in a straight path.

[7:43] We will remove all jealousy from their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them, and they will say, "GOD be praised for guiding us. We could not possibly be guided, if it were not that GOD has guided us. The messengers of our Lord did bring the truth." They will be called: "This is your Paradise. You have inherited it, in return for your works."

Another problem when we compare is being unappreciative. We should ask ourselves whether it's our egos wanting more. We must practice submitting to God's will and being appreciative of what we have. Knowing He is in full control. *[14:7] Your Lord has decreed: "The more you thank Me, the more I give you." But if you turn unappreciative, then My retribution is severe.*

Instead of worldly comparisons, why not compare the soul with the goal of improving it? Let's compare ourselves to Job and ask if we are as steadfast as he was in the face of great adversity. *[21:83] And Job implored his Lord: "Adversity has befallen me, and, of all the merciful ones, You are the Most Merciful."*

Remember to be appreciative.

[14:34] And He gives you all kinds of things that you implore Him for. If you count GOD's blessings, you can never encompass them. Indeed, the human being is transgressing, unappreciative.

Can one make positive worldly comparisons? Yes. For instance, if you come across someone better than you in basketball, instead of letting the ego get worked up, you can make the valid observation that he is more skilled and emulate him. Play against him for the purpose of improving yourself. In this way, you're comparing a specific skill that the

person has; it's focused and purposeful. This is using comparison as a motivation. It can show you what's possible—climbing Mt. Everest, running a sub-4-minute mile (all with God's help). But when you compare to someone's wealth or appearance or social standing, it's often your ego, which you must kill (2:54) not nourish.

In summary, let our comparisons be focused on goals of doing better. We are here to grow our souls and we can learn from others and help others. We should be careful lest our egos drive comparisons and should remember all good is from God not us. Let's not be unhappy about what we don't have but instead appreciate what God has given us.

Mariam Mababaya offers some tips as she writes, "If you see yourself closely, you'll notice that there are good things about you which others lack, tough lessons you have learned, and good qualities which some folks wish they had. Don't compare yourself to others, for each has a book full of stories, and each has a role. Each one has his or her own journey to travel, experiences, talents, and puzzles to solve.... Everyone has his or her own set of strengths and weaknesses.... When God gives good things to some and not you, it's out of wisdom and it's from God's plan."

[20:131] And do not covet what we bestowed upon any other people. ...

[2:152] You shall remember Me, that I may remember you, and be thankful to Me; do not be unappreciative.

[16:18] If you count GOD's blessings, you cannot possibly encompass them. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

[31:12] We have endowed Luqmān with wisdom: "You shall be appreciative of GOD." Whoever is appreciative is appreciative for his own good. As for those who turn unappreciative, GOD is in no need, Praiseworthy.

Anthony

MASJID TUCSON United Submitters International

PO Box 43476 Tucson AZ 85733-3476 USA

Tel: (520) 323 7636

internet web site www.masjiduntucson.org

e-mail: info@masjiduntucson.org masjiduntucson@gmail.com

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Truth

Now and again I'll get asked a question that I don't want to respond to with the truth, so I'll say something to try to end the conversation, which is usually a lie. I'll be sitting at work, looking up stuff like recipes or reading stories on Google, my boss will walk by and ask, "What are you doing?" I reach for some papers near me, quickly read the title and respond by telling him that is what I am working on. It is a horrible habit telling lies. Even if you think no one is getting hurt from it, you are hurting your own soul.

Telling the truth is a very good habit. If you always speak the truth, you can save yourself from a lot of trouble! Here is a story of a man who did a lot of bad things, but his promise to tell the truth saved him.

Once there was a man who asked a righteous member of his community, "I have many bad habits. Which one of them should I give up first?" The righteous member said, "Give up telling lies first and always speak the truth." The man promised to do so and went home.

At night the man was about to go out to steal. Before setting out, he thought for a moment about the promise he made with the righteous member. "If tomorrow they ask me where have I been, what shall I say? Shall I say that I went out stealing? No, I cannot say that. But nor can I lie. If I tell the

truth, everyone will start hating me and call me a thief. I would be punished for stealing."

So the man decided not to steal that night, and gave up this bad habit.

The next day, he felt like drinking wine, but when he was about to do so, he said to himself, "What shall I say to the righteous member if he asks me what did I do during the day? I cannot tell a lie, and if I speak the truth people will hate me, because a Submitter is not allowed to drink wine." And so he gave up the idea of drinking wine.

In this way, whenever the man thought of doing something bad, he remembered his promise to tell the truth at all times. One by one, he gave up all his bad habits and became a good Muslim and a very good person.

[5:119] GOD will proclaim, "This is a day when the truthful will be saved by their truthfulness." They have deserved gardens with flowing streams. They abide therein forever. GOD is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. This is the greatest triumph.

God willing, if you always speak the truth, you can be a good person and a good Muslim whom God likes and favors, which is our true goal.

[8:8] For He has decreed that the truth shall prevail, and the falsehood shall vanish, in spite of the evildoers.

[13:17] He sends down water from the

sky, causing the valleys to overflow, then the rapids produce abundant foam. Similarly, when they use fire to refine metals for their jewelry or equipment, foam is produced. GOD thus cites analogies for the truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it goes to waste, while that which benefits the people stays close to the ground. GOD thus cites the analogies.

If I promise to tell the truth, think about my actions, knowing that I have to tell the truth about them to others, it may keep me from committing any unrighteous acts. The truth can render us righteous, help us prevail, and benefit us by pleasing God!

[7:181] Among our creations, there are those who guide with the truth, and the truth renders them righteous.

Robert

Quran app

[73:4] ... read the Quran from cover to cover.

By God's grace, we have a Quran app available (Authorized English Version, translated by Rashad Khalifa, Ph.D.). Please visit:

<https://www.masjiduntucson.org/quran/app/>

Contact Prayer (Salat) app (calculate prayer times)

By God's grace, we have a Contact Prayer (Salat) time calculator app. Please visit:

<https://www.masjiduntucson.org/salat/app/>