

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Community of Submitters

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Freedom From Prison For You And Me

I recently saw an interesting report about a minimum-security prison in Norway. The prisoners had keys to their own private bedrooms with fully furnished living rooms and kitchens. They could take vocational classes from painting to cooking, and even had a music studio to jam.

The only thing they didn't have was the total freedom to be with their family. The idea was to let them have as normal lives as possible to help them improve. The biggest incentive to change would be to come very close to a normal life yet be denied the freedom to have it all. For most inmates, it would probably be the desire to be back with their family in their own home environment.

I thought about the similarities between this and God's system of helping us redeem ourselves back to Him. Instead of banishing us for our blasphemous thoughts about Him, He gave us another chance to redeem ourselves by creating the Earth as a minimum security "prison" for us to improve ourselves.

Our planet Earth is a like a beautifully designed prison with huge boundaries and plenty of freedom to roam

about it. It's where we will spend an entire lifetime with our prison mates (believers and non-believers), closely watched and guarded by the best security system in the world, which is God and His angels. We have free improvement tools like scriptures and messengers with constant guidance from God. God has also appointed Himself to be our ultimate Judge, so all matters must be referred to Him. God has even given us families, provisions and luxuries to enjoy but these also come packaged with some tests, ups and downs, gains and losses. In our case, since we already have our families here, our ultimate freedom goal would be total freedom from any problems or challenges forever. God willing, we will live in perfect peace and happiness with our eternal families in Paradise forever.

But as we know, to achieve that, we have to steadfastly follow God's rules of His prison while being the best prison inmates we can. In the real world where most people in prison are focused on survival and just getting out before they can even think of starting a new life again, when we get out of God's prison successfully, God willing, we don't have to start anything all

over again. An abode of eternal bliss is already waiting for us to enjoy the moment we step out the gate of our earthly prison.

Heaven: Indescribably Beautiful [32:17] You have no idea how much joy and happiness are waiting for you as a reward for your (righteous) works.

Freedom is nice, but it's not free
As part of the process to permanently exit our earthbound prison we must know that we have to take complete responsibility for the immense freedom we have already been given. Apart from the responsibility to work hard for

Ramadan 2018

God willing

Ramadan starts May 16th and the **last day of fasting** will be June 13th for USA and Canada.

The **Night of Destiny** (Night of Power) will start at the sunset of June 10th for places that begin fasting on May 16th.

For more details (including dates for other places), please visit:
<http://masjiduntucson.org/Ramadan/>

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

our own salvation, I believe we also have some responsibility to help others do the same for themselves (16:125, 22:67, 103:3).

This other responsibility is not as easy as it may seem because we have to think quite differently from our selfish selves. Unless we have a compassionate attitude and understand other people's challenges and circumstances, how will we be able to help them effectively? While everyone is responsible for their own actions, we must be careful that we invite correctly, not give people reasons to be repelled from following God's rules to succeed. Satan will try all sorts of tricks, sometimes using even inmates who are closest to us to see that we don't get out of prison successfully.

Submitters

[41:33] Who can utter better words than one who invites to GOD, works righteousness, and says, "I am one of the submitters"?

[41:34] Not equal is the good response and the bad response. You shall resort to the nicest possible response. Thus, the one who used to be your enemy, may become your best friend.

[41:35] None can attain this except those who steadfastly persevere. None can attain this except those who are extremely fortunate.

Helping our fellow inmates succeed

To help others, it really works to first be perceived as mature, sane, truthful people to whom others can turn for advice. Do you not want to be that wise go-to person and thus become one of God's favorite inmates?

[10:16] Say, "Had GOD willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would you have known anything about it. I have lived among you a whole life before this (and you have known me as a sane, truthful person). Do you not understand?"

An example in the Quran of a wise prisoner is Joseph (Sura 12). He put his trust in God, and used the wisdom, knowledge and righteousness to help

himself and his prison mates. Then, like Joseph, you can be successful on earth and eventually in the Hereafter.

You are free to play your role as an advocator of peace and righteousness as you wish. Keep in mind that God exalts the strivers over the sedentary, so recognize the fantastic opportunity to become a premium servant of God.

Your first step should start with helping a person understand the need to worship God alone. God's system of Submission can then be introduced at the right time to supercharge the growth.

Always deliver your communication in the most polite and relevant manner. I'm emphasizing relevant because unless what you say resonates with a person, you will not get that person's interest. For example, you may repel people if you attack them saying their religion is wrong and yours is right or better. Instead, use a neutral approach and say that you have learned that we humans must turn to God alone and follow the same truth that exists in all His scriptures. Let them know that our god and their god is the same (29:46), and you believe in what God revealed to us and to "their messengers" (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Jesus) and you make no distinction among them.

Three ideas to prepare for the responsibility

1. First come to terms with your own weaknesses and biases then be ready to exit your CZIT (Comfort Zone / Ivory Tower). The people who will come your way may not be like you. Submission is an international religion which is not tied to a culture or language. Traditional Muslims already know the system, so they only need to switch to worshipping God alone and drop a few bad habits. Help them exit their strong culture bias and "being Muslim is best" attitude which ends up repelling people from the word "Islam". On the other hand, the rest of the world has to adopt a whole new system and overcome all the cultural barriers and behaviors that they associate with "Muslims". These are two different markets that need two differ-

ent approaches.

2. At every stage, make compassion a condition for dialogue so your head is clear to see the world from the other person's view. Submitters often talk about tolerance but that can simply mean just forcing themselves to be nice or patient. Compassion is way beyond that. It means engaging with a person in a manner that he or she feels you understand their position and genuinely want to help them find a solution. Remember that you started out like them and they will go through years and years of unique circumstances to learn what God wants them to learn. I know people who were repelled from, or delayed accepting Submission, because of the judgmental, intolerant, and holier-than-thou attitude shown by some submitters with an outward appearance of being nice.

3. Use wisdom – which includes the refined application of knowledge. One of the toughest hurdles for people to overcome is everything associated with traditional Muslims.

How to Spread God's Message

[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.

If you try to sell the words Islam, Muslim, Arabic, Salat, Allah, or cultural habits of traditional Muslims, people may be hesitant to listen to you. In many parts of the world, the word Muslim repels people from the idea of God and religion, so use the most logical path to help people overcome their biases. Educate people slowly by creating content that is local and relevant to them. Don't hesitate to use neutral and international terms like Submission, God, Peace, etc. Remember God told us (through his messenger, Rashad Khalifa) that "Submission" will prevail, which may be more relevant to the future world that will have no familiarity with traditional Islam. At the Messenger of the Covenant's original Masjid in Tuc-

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

son, the outside wall still says, "Happiness is Submission to God." It doesn't say Happiness is Islam. As regards social interaction with your prison mates, you can get to know people and engage with the world. The people you meet—friends, associates and colleagues—may be better submitters than you already or may become so in the future. The Quran does not say that you must exclusively associate with submitters or all your friends must be submitters like you. Otherwise, how will you give the message to people? How will they know you as a righteous person? Naturally, God does advise you to choose your friends carefully. The rules of handling situations that mock or affect your religion are detailed in the Quran (60:8-9, 4:140, 5:57, 6:68-70). While you don't want to get preoccupied with this worldly life, you can still engage in this world and make good choices, with His help. Keep God as a priority and follow the Quran. But unless you interact with people, how will you know what is the most relevant information you can give them to interest them in the truth?

Lastly, remember that while our prison experience is tough, it is also designed to make us happy and enjoy the ride. Your journey can be made smooth and exciting by constantly finding favor with the Judge who rules on the terms of your sentence, and who is also the Lord of the prison and the universe beyond. The secrets to do that are in the Quran.

*Perfect Happiness:
Now and Forever*

[41:30] *Those who proclaim: "Our Lord is GOD," then lead a righteous life, the angels descend upon them: "You shall have no fear, nor shall you grieve. Rejoice in the good news that Paradise has been reserved for you.*

[41:31] *"We are your allies in this life, and in the Hereafter. You will have in it anything you wish for; you will have anything you want.*

[41:32] *"(Such is your) ultimate abode, from a Forgiver, Most Merciful."*

Kais

Quran and Steps 5 & 6 of the 12 Steps

If you have not been following this series of articles, we have been reflecting on using the Quran as a basis for Submitters using the 12 steps that are used in many self-help groups. The February and March issues of the newsletter of this year discuss the first four steps. In this article we look at the next two steps.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our wrongs.

As Submitters we know that it is important to focus on our relationship with God. We also know that He already knows our defects, errors, and sins (and our strengths, and credits). He knows us better than we know ourselves. In spite of that, the Quran makes it clear to us that we must repent to Him for our sins. [66:8] *O you who believe, you shall repent to God a firm repentance. Your Lord will then remit your sins and admit you into gardens with flowing streams....* There are over 50 other verses that speak of repentance. This reflects the fact that there is great healing power in admitting our wrongs. Additionally verses 9:102-104 tell us that God redeems those who confess their sins and He accepts the repentance of those who worship Him.

Please note that this step requires us to admit the exact nature of our wrongs. To be able to admit that exact nature to God we have to have examined our wrongs through the self-reflection of Step 4 and thus admitted them to ourselves. Why does this fifth step involve another human being? Perhaps it may not always be appropriate. But there may be situations where consultation can help us see things from different perspectives. The following verse gives a Quranic basis for this: [42:38] *...Their affairs are decided after due consultation among themselves ...*

While working on their souls, some have found consultation helpful because ex-

plaining something to another gave them greater clarity and insight into the issue. We are not always able to determine if indeed we have something to repent for, or we are not sure of the exact nature of a wrong. Talking it over with someone who we know we can trust is often a great help. Additionally, being able to admit an error to another human being may require a struggle with our egos, which we know we must kill: [2:54] *... You must repent to your Creator. You shall kill your egos. This is better for you in the sight of your Creator...*

However the most critical aspect of this step is admitting to ourselves and to God how we have erred. Even if we do not know someone that we can trust, we know that we can always trust God: [39:38] *... Say, "God is sufficient for me." In Him the trusters shall trust.*

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

One would think that once one recognizes any defect of character one would want to have God remove it immediately. However human beings are often irrational and complex creatures. We may know that we are wrong but are not quite ready to let go of anger or an old resentment, or we are hesitant to change something even when we know we should for our own good. We need to be ready for the healing of old wounds and letting go of the past to make progress.

As long as we cling to old patterns, we are not ready for the future. Like Satan, we may still be trying to prove our version of reality to be correct, regardless of the damage to our souls. Rather than repenting, asking for forgiveness and reforming after he refused to obey God and prostrate before Adam, he asked for a respite and said that he would mislead as many humans as possible into his kingdom (17:61-62, 38:71-83). Thus, he is still caught up in arrogance and wanting to be a god beside God rather than submitting to the one true God. [17:62] *He said, "Since You have honored him over me, if You respite me till the Day of Resurrec-*

(Continued on page 4)

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(Continued from page 3)

tion, I will possess all his descendants, except a few." When we persist in patterns that are harmful to our souls, we are following in Satan's footsteps.

What can we do if we find ourselves in this situation of not being able to let go? Sometimes it helps to think about ways we can remedy a character defect. For instance, if we know we are quick to anger we can work on remembering to subdue our anger (3:134) and count to ten before reacting to something. If we notice that we are stingy (17:100) we can intentionally work to change that by setting up a charity fund to be available to give out to anyone needing help, be it in our community or on the street corner. If we are anxious (70:19) we can ask God for courage and steadfastness.

It may help to watch our attachments. If we're too attached to something or someone it may be hard to submit when things do not go as we had hoped. We may then get upset or frustrated and hurt ourselves.

It may also help us to realize that our tests are designed by God specifically for each of us to come to know ourselves and, God willing, recognize our own character defects. Therefore other people involved are immaterial. It is not them and their actions we need to focus on, but working on ourselves and our defects with God's help.

However sometimes we are just not ready

to do the right thing in a situation or we don't know how to change. Whatever the cause of our reticence, we can always pray to God for help. We may not know what is holding us back but God knows, and if we are sincere in our desire to change He will help us. It is good to remember that His timing may not be our timing. Sometimes we have not worked through an issue sufficiently, and He is helping us do that in a manner we do not recognize. There is a wonderful one-liner that perfectly illustrates one common character defect: "God grant me patience, and I want it right now!"

Once we are truly ready to let go and turn *everything* over to God, then we can move forward. Then we can be like the believers described in this next verse: [3:147] *Their only utterance was, "Our Lord, forgive us our sins, and our transgressions, strengthen our foothold, and grant us victory over the disbelievers."* (Note that it may help some of us to adapt this prayer for victory over Satan or the "disbelieving" parts of ourselves.)

When we are able to reach this point by God's grace, we are truly blessed, for in turning things over to God we have grasped the strongest bond: [31:22] *Those who submit completely to God, while leading a righteous life, have gotten hold of the strongest bond. For God is in full control of all things.*

Submitters striving to heal & grow our souls with Quran

God Willing

33rd Annual Conference United Submitters

August 3-5, 2018

Dallas, Texas



God willing, the annual conference of United Submitters International will be in Dallas TX, on August 3-5. It is an opportunity to remember God, increase our knowledge and meet our brethren in faith (3:191-194, 18:28, 58:11, 49:10).

Registration and hotel details are available online at:

www.masjiduntucson.org/conference/

As usual, attendance will be by invitation only. To help us organize a successful conference—and God has always been generous and gracious towards us—please let us know of your plans as soon as you know.

For questions or information please email: info@masjiduntucson.org.