

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Opportunities to Remember God

There are a lot of opportunities around us. We just need to grab the right ones at the right times. Opportunity is defined as an appropriate or favourable time or occasion. Everyone has them. It is up to you to make the best use of the opportunities God provides. There is a proverb which says, Opportunity knocks at every door but only once. But I feel God gives us an opportunity in our life almost every day; it is up to us to grasp and utilize this opportunity.

Once I saw a man on the street in dirty clothes, with shabby long hair and beard, constantly scratching his head, neck, back, etc., and doing weird actions. Suddenly a thought came to me, how I am so fortunate to have a sound state of mind compared to him. And the very next moment I grabbed the opportunity to thank God for giving me the sound and healthy state of mind.

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

[32:9] He shaped him and blew into him from His spirit. And He gave you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brains; rarely are you thankful.

It is due to immense mercy of God, that I could thank Him at the right time. I could grab that opportunity of thanking God, only because He has blessed me and chosen me to become a submitter. God gives opportunity to everyone but only a few realize it. When you are drinking water, there is an opportunity to praise God. You don't know from where that water has come. How many stages it has passed through till it reached you. How many people are employed in the process. But finally, it reaches your mouth to quench your thirst. Who arranged all this? None other than God because we know God is running everything. Then will you not take the opportunity to acknowledge this blessing and thank God?

We all know that this life is temporary. We are sent down on planet earth to pass the test. Hence, we must redeem ourselves to get back to the Paradise. And to pass this test God has provided us the book, i.e., Quran with clear guidelines. Just imagine how much God loves us and wants to see us back in the Paradise. God is so clement that He made this test extremely simple for us if only we know.

[54:17] We made the Quran easy to learn. Does any of you wish to learn?

A couple of years back I was in financial trouble, but I had a strong moral support from submitters to remind me that God is running everything. I was trying to find solace only by imploring God excessively. He did not let me go astray but kept me steadfast till the test got over. Now what do we get to learn from this? God had put me into that test to offer me an opportunity to be more appreciative, thankful, imploring, reverent and righteous. It was indeed a blessing in disguise.

[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.

When the test got over God not only provided a good job for me but also arranged a good job for my son too. Things got back to normal after that. But I feel it worth mentioning here that during that testing time God always took care of my basic necessities. Never did He let me or my family members go to sleep hungry. This could happen only because of God's help and because of reverencing God

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during my testing time. I tried to realize the opportunity offered to me. Many a time we fail to realize the hidden opportunity given to us by God, because the human being is impatient.

[17:11] The human being often prays for something that may hurt him, thinking that he is praying for something good. The human being is impatient.

[21:37] The human being is impatient by nature. I will inevitably show you My signs; do not be in such a hurry.

Sometimes we get angry or upset over a petty issue. When things don't work as we wish, we become grumpy. But just imagine a person losing his most beloved son and at the hands of his other sons due to envy, yet he does not show any sign of anger. He simply shows patience and leaves the matter to God. I am talking about the prophet Jacob, who gave us the best example of patience and trust in God after losing his beloved son Joseph (12:18, 83). Jacob grabbed the opportunity to show patience and reverencing God at the right time rather than blaming or cursing or abusing anyone.

Another example of patience is Abraham and his son Ismail (37:102). We all know how Ismail showed patience by being ready to let his father sacrifice him to realize a satanic dream. Is this not an opportunity grabbed by Ismail and Abraham both to please God? I feel the level of patience, trust and reverence to God shown by them is possible only because they gave the least importance to this temporary life in this world. Their sole objective was only to make it big in the Hereafter. Should we not aspire to be in their company in the Hereafter? To realize this aspiration, we must always be ready to grab every opportunity to please God.

When we plan for a vacation, we book tickets months in advance; we pack our baggage; we plan what we'll take along. I feel our journey to Heaven can be compared to planning a holi-

day. But the procedure is bit reverse. Here first we have to arrange our baggage loaded with righteous deeds, only then our berth in Paradise will be confirmed. People like me who have crossed the age of forty have to try hard and get a confirmed seat in the Paradise. I must make sure that all my actions and deeds are well in accordance with the guidelines mentioned in Quran. I cannot afford to miss a single opportunity to believe in God alone, reverence God, praise God and appreciate the blessings of God.

[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.

[4:57] As for those who believe and lead a righteous life, we will admit them into gardens with flowing streams; they abide therein forever. They will have pure spouses therein. We will admit them into a blissful shade.

All this will become true, only if we utilize the opportunity given by God in the best way.

On the Day of Resurrection when hell fire will be shown to the disbelievers they will start playing the blame game (37:27) but by then the game will be over. Though God has given them hearing, eyesight, brains and wisdom they failed to catch the bus of righteousness. They never found any fault in themselves. Rather, they always tried to find faults in others.

*"Through life, I kept making this mistake again and again; The dust was on my face, and I kept wiping the mirror."
(Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib)*

We should never forget that the present temporary life given to us is the final opportunity to make it big in Paradise. Therefore, let us make sure we do what we need to do. We will try and grab every opportunity that comes our way to please God.

[3:191] They remember GOD while standing, sitting, and on their sides,

and they reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You did not create all this in vain. Be You glorified. Save us from the retribution of Hell.

We will not leave any opportunity to commemorate God be it small or big. Eating, drinking, looking at our lives, we will not forget, God willing, to appreciate God's grace for arranging it all for us.

Abdul Ghani

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).

Conference details including registration and hotel information will be available online, God willing, 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.

Habits, part 2

(Continued from the March 2018 Submitters Perspective)

How do we make changes by creating habits? There are many ways and suggestions on how to create habits and God willing, I am going to share a model I personally thought looked best. Much of this is taken from the Internet (you should examine what works best for you in accordance with the Quran)

1. Start Small. Change requires work. So, as much as we want to make changes quickly, it may not always be possible. For example, God encourages us to meditate at night (39:9) and eat and drink moderately (7:31). But completely changing your diet overnight and meditating for 20 minutes every day even though you have barely managed to meditate 5 minutes for one night in the past week is a tall order. This requires a tremendous amount of willpower and God's help. Research on willpower shows that for the average person, if you use it a lot, it gets tired. And when it does, you are likely to regress or quit.

One idea is to start small and work at it.

- Instead of expecting to add a whole hour of meditation or Quran reading per night, start with ten minutes or even five or two minutes. Work your way up.
- Instead of cold turkey switching to a new diet, start by replacing one unhealthy menu choice with a vegetable or a lower calorie option in a meal each day.
- With the goal of being reverent in every Salat, start with one Salat. Then slowly keep asking God's help and persevering towards your goal.

The idea is to establish a habit behavior first. Then increasing the frequency or intensity with God's help.

2. Get Hooked on Your Habit. Humans naturally have a harder time giving up

something they have invested a lot into. A technique often attributed to comedian Jerry Seinfeld is called "Don't break the chain". Each day he accomplished his writing, he would place a big red X on his calendar for that date. Soon, he had a "chain" he didn't want to break. This neat tactic allows us to make our efforts visible and gives us an added incentive not to break the habit. The longer the chain is on our calendar, the greater the sense of accomplishment, by God's grace. And consequently, we try harder to preserve the good habit.

You can use a calendar and start "marking" your progress. God willing you'll keep the chain of good habits strong.

3. Have Clear Intentions. If you're serious about your new habit, imprecise intentions like "I'll try to meditate two or three times this week" aren't enough. According to research, it is in our interests to plan and set aside specific times and places. So, for example, say, "God willing, I will meditate for 10 minutes tonight at 9pm." That can help you plan your schedule and look forward to the activity.

4. Appreciate Small Achievements. God's rewards are the best. However, to encourage ourselves, we can use some worldly rewards too. For example, you can tell yourself that if you are reverent during your Night Contact Prayers two days in a row, you can have your favorite ice-cream, God willing. And as you enjoy the treat, appreciate God, who made your achievement possible. Ask His help in keeping up the good work. Each time you do that, there's positive reinforcement. In turn, God willing you will be able to work towards bigger successes in the future.

Appreciative vs Unappreciative

[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.

5. Make things easy for you. We often go by what's easy. So, if you're working to-

wards eating moderately, then make it easier for yourself to stay away from foods that tempt you. Put those cookies away or out of sight, so it requires effort to get to them. Or if you are working towards reading the Quran before bedtime, keep a copy of the Quran next to your bed. The idea is to make the new habit easier to achieve with God's help.

6. Carefully choose supportive friends.

The Quran reminds us to choose our friends carefully (53:29-30). According to some studies, we adopt goals or learn from the people around us. Similarly, there's an oft-quoted aphorism which goes, "You're the average of the five people you spend the most time with." So, if we're working towards a righteous habit, but our friends are not supportive or have unhealthy habits, it makes it harder on us. It's to our own advantage to create a support group that inspires us and encourages us to try again if we fail.

[18:28] You shall force yourself to be with those who worship their Lord day and night, seeking Him alone. Do not turn your eyes away from them, seeking the vanities of this world. Nor shall you obey one whose heart we rendered oblivious to our message; one who pursues his own desires, and whose priorities are confused.

7. Pre-Commit to Your Habit. Imagine it's 7:00 pm and you're tired after a long day's work. Your plans of doing meditation may look shaky as your brain starts rationalizing. "I'm quite tired today. I wonder if I'll even be able to focus on God when I'm this tired. Maybe I'll try tomorrow morning after Dawn Prayer. Or perhaps tomorrow evening..." What if, instead, you had promised a friend to meet (either in person or virtually) to read Quran together or even silently meditate and encourage each other? By pre-committing, you may add an extra layer of accountability. This may, God willing, help you push through even when you're tempted not to.

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8. Stay Hopeful, Don't Give Up. If you fail in an attempt, don't beat yourself up and be tempted to give up. Instead, stay positive, knowing God is Forgiver, Most Merciful. Ask God's help and try again the next day! God gives us a good model or template for this related to the habit of saying, "God willing."

Remembering God Every Chance We Get [18:23-4] *You shall not say that you will do anything in the future, without saying, "GOD willing." If you forget to do this, you must immediately remember your Lord and say, "May my Lord guide me to do better next time."*

In conclusion, God willing, we keep our focus on our purpose in life which is to worship God alone (51:56). When doing a self-reflection, we remember the purpose is to increase our submission to God alone. When creating new habits, we do them out of reverence to God alone. God willing, if we do it in this way, and ask God to help us, then He will change our behaviors to grow our souls and be pleasing to Him alone.

References

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Robert

The Importance of Meditation

In the Quran, God Almighty says: [33:41] *O you who believe, you shall remember GOD frequently.* [33:42] You shall glorify Him day and night.* And the footnote reminds us: * Your god is whatever occupies your thoughts most of the time. Hence the commandment to commemorate God and glorify Him day and night. See Appendix 27.

Our worship practices are all designed by GOD for us to achieve this goal, God willing. For example, [29:45] *the remembrance of GOD (through Salat) is the most important objective.*

And: [4:103] *Once you complete your Contact Prayer (Salat), you shall remember GOD while standing, sitting, or lying down.*

This is why dhikr (commemoration or meditation) is so emphasized by God, and we spend our days and nights, God willing, commemorating GOD alone.

[3:41] *... Commemorate your Lord frequently; and meditate night and day."*

[73:2] *Meditate during the night, except rarely.*

[76:25] *And commemorate the name of your Lord day and night.*

I set small goals, for example, aiming for 5 minutes of dhikr a day. This is achievable and bite-sized for me. You can vary your dhikr each day. It could be commemoration, reading Quran, watching a video about God, listening to a version of the Night of Destiny (commemoration) audio, or listening to a few dhikr songs.

God is Forgiver, Most Merciful and He has pardoned us for not doing as much as we should: [73:20] *Your Lord knows that you meditate during two-thirds of the night, or half of it, or one-third of it, and so do some of those who believed with you. GOD has designed the night and the day, and He knows that you cannot always do this. He has pardoned you. Instead, you shall read what you can of the Quran. ...*

Praise be to God for this awesome gift of meditation to grow our souls and gain such grand credit, God willing.

Reference

Appendix 27, "Who is Your God?" from: Quran the Final Testament, Authorized English Version, translated from the original by Rashad Khalifa, Ph.D.

Abeer

[7:205] *You shall remember your Lord within yourself, publicly, privately, and quietly, day and night; do not be unaware.*