

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

# Submitters Perspective

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## Oppressive Behavior and the Importance of God's Guidance

The recent events in Iraq including both the prison atrocities and the decapitation of an innocent businessman by terrorists highlight the horrors of war. These incidents have made the news, partly because people connected to them in some way tried hard to make the information public. There are thousands of perhaps more grisly crimes that we do not even hear about, whether they occur in the Middle East or Africa or some other place far from our perception. To an extent we are grateful not to have more images and stories of human brutality bombard our senses. One thing is clear. Times like these have been known to bring out acts of courage and compassion, but for the large part they unfortunately bring out the worst in human beings.

I am no psychologist, and for the most part I do not understand why humans behave the way they do. However people have theories about it. In the 1970s experiments carried out at Stanford (<http://www.prisonexp.org/>) and Yale ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram\\_experiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment)) showed that authority and legitimizing ideologies could influence people's actions. In the presence of social and institutional support subjects went as far as inflicting harm upon their fellow human beings. The prison guards in the Stanford experiment often grew sadistic and cruel (even though they knew it was only an experiment) and the study had to be cut short to prevent further mistreatment.

One of the observations made by the researcher in the Stanford experiment was that of the fifty plus people who had seen the prison, only one of them questioned its morality.

The subjects in the Yale experiment were willing to hypothetically induce shocks of 300-450 volts on the "errant learner" because they were told the experiment required it. Normally, the people in the experiment would not approve of or indulge in the previously mentioned hurtful actions.

This kind of cruel and oppressive behavior is not new or representative of "our evil generation" by any means. It has plagued humankind since the beginning.

## Oppressive Behavior

*Cont'd from page 1*

We have examples in the Quran of the behavior of people like Pharaoh (7:127), Qaroon (28:76), the disbelievers who threw Abraham into the fire (21:68), those who watched the burning of the believers (85:5-7), and even those who killed their own baby girls (16:57-59). Killing a stranger by some corrupted ideology is terrible enough, but one's own innocent child who has committed no wrong? And if it can get any worse—it is thinking that such evil acts are the right thing to do! This also reminds me of some other verses in the Quran.

*We created man in the best design. Then turned him into the lowliest of the lowly. [95:4-5]*

*By the afternoon. The human being is utterly lost. Except those who believe and lead a righteous life, and exhort one another to uphold the truth, and exhort one another to be steadfast. [103:1-3]*

*He (satan) said, "My Lord, since You have willed that I go astray, I will surely entice them on earth; I will send them all astray. Except those among Your worshipers who are devoted absolutely to You alone."*

To me these verses tell us that unless we are steadfast in our belief, we risk forgetting the honorable principles given to us in the Quran by God and turning into the lowliest of the lowly. It is not enough to say, "I believe," for that only makes Satan more active in targeting us. Instead we have to continuously strive to stay on God's path and grow closer to Him.

The good news is that if we do hold fast to God, He protects and guides us (4:174-175). God gives

us various means to stay on His path and avoid evil. These include seeking refuge in God from the devil and from evil (7:200-201, 23:97-98, 41:36, 113:1-6, 114:1-6), being steadfast, observing the Contact Prayers (2:45, 2:153, 29:45) and praying for God's help in the face of adversity (2:250, 7:126-128). Additionally, being around those who exhort us to be steadfast and help us in righteousness, i.e. our brethren in faith, is always beneficial (18:28, 103:1-3).

*When the devil whispers to you any whisper, seek refuge in GOD; He is Hearer, Omniscient. Those who are righteous, whenever the devil approaches them with an idea, they remember, whereupon they become seers. [7:200-201]*

*You shall seek help through steadfastness and the Contact Prayers (Salat). This is difficult indeed, but not so for the reverent, who believe that they will meet their Lord; that to Him they ultimately return. [2:45-46]*

*O you who believe, seek help through steadfastness and the Contact Prayers (Salat). GOD is with those who steadfastly persevere. [2:153]*

Verses like 2:153 are very reassuring because we know that if God is with us, no one (including Satan and his army) can defeat us (3:150, 160). I believe this refers to both spiritual and physical defeat. If we are with God, He supports us and strengthens our foothold (47:7). He also appoints angels as guards to protect us (13:11). Once again, I believe this protection is from both physical and spiritual harm. To be worthy of this it is important to turn totally to God (2:238, 4:146, 22:15, 26:89). This is the natural instinct (30:30) placed into the people by God's mercy.

*If GOD supports you, none can defeat you. And if He abandons you, who else can support you? In GOD the believers shall trust. [3:160]*

*Shifts (of angels) take turns, staying with each one of you - they are in front of you and behind you. They stay with you, and guard you in accordance with GOD's commands. Thus, GOD does not change the condition of any people unless they themselves make the decision to change. If GOD wills any hardship for any people, no force can stop it. For they have none beside Him as Lord and Master. [13:11]*

*Therefore, you shall devote yourself to the religion of strict monotheism. Such is the natural instinct placed into the people by GOD. Such creation of GOD will never change. This is the perfect religion, but most people do not know. [30:30]*

*You shall consistently observe the Contact Prayers, especially the middle prayer, and devote yourselves totally to GOD. [2:238]*

*Only those who come to GOD with their whole heart (will be saved). [26:89]*

Another great gift and help to us is the Quran—containing guidance and wisdom (2:185, 10:57, 36:2, 44:4). The Quran is God's word. It tells us what the right thing to do is, and cautions us away from evil deeds. Those who are aware of and uphold God's commands know that He has made life sacred (6:151, 17:33), that aggression is not permitted (2:190), that oppression is worse than murder (2:217) and that we have to be absolutely equitable even when our conflicts with people tempt us to act in anger (5:8).

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## ANECDOTES

### The rest is just sand

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" (5 cm) in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. The students laughed. The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognize that this is your life. The rocks are the important things—GOD, your family, your partner, your health, your children—anything that is so important to you that if it were lost, you would be nearly destroyed. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff.

"If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Remember GOD always, love your partner recklessly and with devotion. Play with your children. Take care of yourself. Be there emotionally if not physically when your parents need you. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal. Take care of the rocks first—the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

### Lord, forgive me (the world is mine)

Today, upon the bus I saw a lovely girl with golden hair,  
I envied her, she seemed so gay, and I wished I were so fair,  
When suddenly she rose to leave, and I saw her hobble down the aisle,  
She had one leg, and wore a crutch, and as she passed, a smile.

Oh God, forgive me when I whine... I have two legs. The world is mine.

And then I stopped to buy some sweets, The lad who sold them had such charm,  
I talked to him: he seemed so glad... if I were late it would do no harm,  
And as I left he said to me : "Thank you. You have been so kind."  
"It's nice to talk to folks like you. You see," he said, "I'm blind."

Oh God, forgive me when I whine... I have two legs. The world is mine.

Later, walking down the street, I saw a child with eyes of blue.  
He stood and watched the others play; it seemed he knew not what to do.  
I stopped a moment, then I said, "Why don't you join the others, dear?"  
He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew he could not hear.

Oh God, forgive me when I whine... I have two legs. The world is mine.

With legs to take me where I'd go,  
With eyes to see the sunset glow,  
Two ears to hear what I would know...

Oh God, forgive me when I whine... I have two legs. The world is mine.

*Authors Unknown - Submitted by sisters Asiya and Maryam.*

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## Oppressive Behavior

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God willing, those who follow these commands would not commit the atrocities we see around us today. Sadly religion—particularly Islam as portrayed today—has such a bad name, that many consider it unintelligent to be religious. This could not be further from the truth. The reality is that true intelligence lies in worshipping God and taking heed of the guidance He gives us (2:269, 3:190-194, 5:100, 14:52, 38:29).

*This is a proclamation for the people, to be warned herewith, and to let them know that He is only one god, and for those who possess intelligence to take heed. [14:52]*

*This is a scripture that we sent down to you, that is sacred - perhaps they reflect on its verses. Those who possess intelligence will take heed. [38:29]*

*O people, enlightenment has come to you herein from your Lord, and healing for anything that troubles your hearts, and guidance, and mercy for the believers. [10:57]*

*Ramadan is the month during which the Quran was revealed, providing guidance for the people, clear teachings, and the statute book.... [2:185]*

In summary, it is easy to be misguided by Satan and his forces and turn into the lowliest of the lowly. And while there is no compulsion in religion, God has made good and evil clearly distinct (2:256). Believing in God and leading a righteous life in accordance with His teachings in the scripture admits us into God's mercy and gives us the blessing of the strongest bond (31:22). The choice is ours to make.

*There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in GOD has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient. [2:256]*

*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. [31:22]*

Thank you God.

Faiz C

## God willing 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference United Submitters Aug 6-8, 2004 Tucson, Arizona

This is a final reminder for the conference. Remember that this is a great opportunity to be with Submitters from all around the world.

### How to Register?

The conference is open to all people of the scripture, who are striving to submit to the will and commandments of God, do not associate any partners with Him, and follow the religion of Abraham, the monotheist. If you'd like to attend the conference, you need a registration form.

If you did not receive a registration form in the mail, you can request it from us by e-mail at [info@masjiduntucson.org](mailto:info@masjiduntucson.org).

We also set up a registration page on the internet for your convenience at [www.masjiduntucson.org/conference/](http://www.masjiduntucson.org/conference/)

God willing, we are looking forward to meeting our family of submitters.

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